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Glen A. Pierce

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evangelical

# VISITOR

December 1996





# Special People

**Anna Climenhaga (seated, on the right), with her sisters Evelyn (standing) and Marjorie**



There is a sister in the Kindersley Brethren in Christ Church that we have all admired—Anna Climenhaga. Anna is the daughter of Naaman and Sally Climenhaga, and lives with her two sisters Marjorie and Evelyn. Anna was born at their farm home in the Clearview, Saskatchewan, area. There with her family she attended the Clearview Brethren in Christ Church until a new church was built in Kindersley in 1953. Her parents were the pastoral couple for twenty-one years.

Anna became a Christian early in life and was baptized at their farm home in the cattle watering trough in 1937. She attended Ontario Bible School and Upland Bible College in California. She taught school three years in Ontario; one in Haysville and two years at Quaker Road School. In 1957 Anna came back to her hometown of Kindersley and taught at the Elizabeth Public School until she retired in 1986.

Besides Anna's teaching career, she faithfully served God and the church in many different capacities. She was a Sunday School teacher and superintendent for many years. When anything needed to be done, Anna was there. When the parsonage needed painting, you would find Anna standing on a table, painting the ceiling and walls. When anyone needed help, she often came to the rescue.

Anna and her sisters were given to much hospitality, serving

wonderful meals and keeping people overnight. Over the years they collected many pounds of used motel soap, taking it home and cleaning each piece for M.C.C. relief work.

Anna enjoyed traveling. One year she was privileged to go to Korea and meet the little girl whom she had sponsored through World Vision. In 1987 she went along with her friend Ruth Garman on a tour of the Brethren in Christ World Missions in Africa. Here she had the joy of meeting many missionaries for whom she had prayed.

In August 1992, Anna was diagnosed with cancer in the lymph glands. She has taken chemotherapy three times, but the cancer is still growing. She has decided now to stop the treatments, and is completely at peace trusting God to work his will in her life. She finds it difficult to swallow, due to a lump at the back of her tongue, and eats very small amounts at a time.

Anna felt well between the treatments until recently and was able to continue with many activities. She arranged patches for quilts which Marjorie sewed for M.C.C. and went to the sewing bee as long as her health allowed.

Anna is unable to go to church or anywhere now, but her spirits are good and her faith in God is as strong as ever.

**SPECIAL NOTE:**  
Articles about "Special People" in their teens, 20s, 30s, and 40s are invited.

**"Special People" profiles a wide variety of Brethren in Christ members of all ages and from all walks of life.**

**YOU are invited to submit a short article about some "Special Person" you would like to introduce to Visitor readers. Articles should be typewritten, preferably 300-400 words, and must have the approval of the person being profiled. If your article is accepted for publication, we will contact you to secure a photo for publication (which will be returned).**

**Mail your article to Evangelical Visitor, P.O. Box 166, Nappanee, IN 46550.**

*Submitted by Mrs. Reeta Housser, Kindersley, Sask.*



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# Room...

## BUT NOT IN THE INN

by Ruth Bert



Carefully I watched street signs and searched for familiar landmarks. I was looking again for the used-book shop in which I'd collected books to read on snowbound days. There—that church looked familiar and, yes, that street name sounded right. And there it was. Dusty windows fronted the shop, and I entered to find the teetering piles of books on and between the shelves, and the dogs that lay like rugs come to life at the approach or nudge of a customer's foot.

Today I was browsing for anything of interest. I wandered aimlessly for a while. The small brown book, cover dulled with age, lay in a disheveled pile of Christmas books near the window. No Room in the Inn, by William Allen Knight, published in 1910 by Pilgrim Press. What new thing could this little, aged book offer? Joseph and Mary found the inn full, and had to spend the night in a stable—a cold cave, perhaps—makeshift lodging. Jesus was born there. How many Christmases had the story been told, acted, heard, seen?

Still, I picked the book and, with hope, paid for it and left the shop. At home I began a journey to Bethlehem with the author. On the journey he told me with passion what he had learned from a dragoman (a guide) on the same road.

Bethlehem—what happened there? An extraordinary hospitality for a world-shaking and world-shaping birth. The inn, the meeting place of the crowd, had no room for the travel-weary couple. But a peasant cave-house, which the animals shared with the lowly family, was open with a warm welcome. Little they had, but the family willingly shared it with those who came to their door. Gladly they sheltered the travelers from Nazareth. Mary's baby was born in the warmth and welcome of an open home of Bethlehem folks.

And so my journey to Bethlehem with the author was a traveler's delight: the destination was a real climax to the trip. The dusty little book was worth the price I'd thought quite high. Small price to pay for the joyful thought of Jesus' coming to earth and being received right into the heart of a home, and the heart of an individual, and the heart of another, and another.

Today, too, there is room for Jesus. Not in the inn, the meeting place of the popular crowd, but in each individual who invites him as best he or she knows how. What a joyous celebration with those who have received him into their very hearts. And from such a lowly throne the Savior changed, and changes, the world.



# In a foreign land on Christmas Day

by Todd Wenger

Burkina Faso is an interesting place for a foreigner to spend Christmas. "Why?" you might ask. "Isn't it lonely at Christmas, far from friends and family?" In Burkina Faso, one way that relationships are nurtured is by visiting. Christmas Day is no exception.

On Christmas Day, families prepare special meals, including foods they don't ordinarily eat. During the day people visit one another. When you arrive at someone's house, at a minimum you receive a drink and often a plate of food. This past Christmas I didn't have a free moment all day and I still didn't get to visit everyone I had hoped. I had more than I could eat at three different homes and the fellowship was warm.

One day some time ago I was talking with Mattheus, a local

person who had studied at a university in Germany for several years. He told me he hated spending Christmas in a foreign land. Mattheus had been living in a dorm, and when Christmas Day approached, people went home to spend the holidays with their families, not unlike in North America. Mattheus didn't have any family in Germany and had no place to go. Christmas became one of the loneliest days of his life.

What a contrast between our experiences. I had to think of Mary and Joseph, in a foreign land, looking for someone to welcome them. Would they have found a place to stay, to eat, and to visit in Burkina Faso? How about in your corner of the world?

I'm not proposing we should not spend time with family. But living in Burkina Faso has given me a new idea of what Christmas Day can be about. Not only can we visit with our families, but we can also make sure those around us who don't have family close-by can feel God's love through our kindness and hospitality.

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*Todd Wenger of Quarryville, Pa., writes from his MCC assignment in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.*

# A "Christmas" night in Nicaragua—with frogs and hens

by Bob Buxman

I slept in a stable one night, the one where Jesus was born.

Well, it wasn't really where he was born, it was Nicaragua. And it wasn't really a stable, but after spending the night in it, it kind of reminded me of one.

It was actually a very humble Christian home that also serves as a church, located on a little hill close to Juigalpa, a community about two hours from Managua. The building was a typical rural Central American structure—clay tile roof, mud and brick walls, dirt floor with a variety of animals running freely in and out. Beautiful...in its own way. I felt honored to be there with Nicaraguan brothers and sisters in faith.

I was helping with a two-day seminar on Anabaptism. It was the end of the first day and we were all tired. We went to bed about 9:30, lying helter-skelter on foam pads on the dirt floor of the small living room. The women slept in the bedroom.

We all slept in our clothes. No mosquitoes; I was grateful for that small blessing. I slept well, until about 3:00 a.m., when the first of the women rose to start cooking. She noisily chopped kin-

dling with a machete and occasionally returned to the bedroom to enlist another woman to help her with breakfast.

I fell back asleep until I felt something run across my body. A scorpion? I bolted up, grabbed my flashlight, and examined my sheet. Nothing. More calmly, I surveyed the thin mattress. Just a frog! The man next to me woke up and asked what was wrong. He laughed, got up and shooed it away. It came back a few minutes later. They said he probably just liked *gringos*!

The frog (I guess) and I went back to sleep again. About 4:30 the two hens sleeping among the mattresses with their chicks began waking up, peeping and clucking—quietly at first and then crescendoing as they anticipated the first light. Finally one of the women working in the kitchen came to shoo them out. They went out all right...straight over mattresses and sleeping *hermanos* (brothers). The sister giggled all the way back to the kitchen.

From 4:30 to 5:00 (just an inkling of light now) most of the men were on their elbows and we were all energetically engaged in a discussion. Such is the way of the *campesinos* (poor farmers)...and stables. I can imagine Jesus' first night being something like that, among such a people and such a commotion...minus foam pad and flashlight, of course.

In fact, as I reflect on it, the reason I felt so privileged to be there was because Jesus was there! He was among us, with us, incarnate in the brothers and sisters gathered. A holy night for me! An early Christmas gift maybe?

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*Bob Buxman, of Dallas, Ore., writes from his assignment with MCC in Central America.*



Addressing some

# PREVALENT MYTHS

Surrounding

small GROUPS

by Layne Lebo

**O**VER THE COURSE of the past 20 years small groups have been making a comeback in the church and currently are one of the most significant phenomena in the life of the church worldwide. However, small groups do represent a change for many of us in the way we do church, and change is not always welcomed with open arms. Mark Twain, commenting on the resistance with which change is often met, noted, "The only person who likes change is a wet baby."

In my role as Associate Pastor of Young Adult Ministries at the Mechanicsburg Brethren in Christ Church, one of my major responsibilities is giving oversight to small groups (ours are called community groups) among our adults ages 18-45. Initially I was convinced that small groups were important to our church for relationship building and the meeting of needs in a safe setting. But over the past fifteen months, I have come to see small groups from a much broader and clearer perspective. I now recognize that small groups are vital to the success of our church in accomplishing our vision of reaching the Mechanicsburg area for Christ.

As I study the topic of small groups and as I promote small groups in the life of our body, I frequently encounter assessments (sometimes spoken, often hinted at) which, while containing grains of truth, do not do justice to small groups. I'd like to address four

of the more prominent myths surrounding small groups and share some insights into the many benefits of small groups for the local church body.

## ***Myth #1—The concept of small groups is just another passing fad.***

Small groups are making a comeback in the worldwide church, but they are not a fad and the likelihood of them passing is not great. Small house groups were foundational in the ministry of the New Testament church. Throughout his epistles, the Apostle Paul addresses leaders "and the church that meets at their house" (Romans 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19, Col. 4:15). And in Acts 2:46 we are told, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." Acts 5:42 also notes, "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Some scholars, in critiquing the above claims, point to the fact that large buildings like synagogues and temples were often used for worship. They question placing strong emphasis upon the New Testament references to the church meeting in homes as proof that small groups were a vital part of the New Testament church. But in his book *The Second Reformation*, author Bill Beckham states, "Who is right? Did the

early church meet in large or small meeting places? The answer is—both are right. The nature of the church is to function with two wings: the church gathered in the 'congregational setting' and the church scattered in the 'community cell setting.' Our problem today is that the traditional church ignores the New Testament pattern and lives without New Testament community. In light of the overwhelming evidence, how can that continue?"

To those who point to small groups as merely a passing fad, it is also important to note that small groups have played a key role in the life of the church throughout history. Following Jesus' death and resurrection, small groups were essential to the church as intense persecution from the Roman Empire drove the church underground for the better part of three centuries. Centuries later, the Anabaptist movement in Europe flourished as believers met secretly in small groups in homes due to persecution. Small groups were also a key emphasis in John Wesley's Methodist Movement for the purposes of grounding believers in the Word, accountability, and training for ministry. It has also often been said that every revival throughout history has been spawned through the faithful prayer and commitment of a small group of believers. Small groups have been around for a long time and show no signs of going away anytime soon. In fact, many churches around the world who are



experiencing God's anointing in special ways point to small groups as the foundation of their ministry.

***Myth #2—Small groups are primarily for fellowship or for needy people and are rather limited in their "true ministry" potential.***

This statement represents a misconception that I held prior to catching a larger vision for small groups in the life of our church. At Mechanicsburg our purpose for community groups is twofold: (1) to *minister* to people by meeting needs, as group members use their spiritual gifts in ministry and hold each other accountable in their walks with God, and (2) to *multiply* as people are added, leaders developed, and new groups formed. In sum, the goal of our community groups is *life change*.

I have come to recognize that the potential for fellowship and the meeting of needs in small groups is great, but if fellowship and caring for needs is the end for which we strive, our groups will become ingrown and stagnant and will eventually die. Having said that, we are seeing that as groups focus on ministry and outreach, excellent fellowship and a warm atmosphere where hurts can be shared and needs met are welcome side effects.

***Myth #3—Small groups are for young people. My needs are met just fine in Sunday school and in the worship service.***

Sociologists and others who study cultural trends tell us that the primary cry of "Generation Xers" (those born between 1964 and 1980) is for relationships. The world around us is calling out to be known intimately and to be loved and accepted. In our society this happens in bars, clubs, and coffee houses. Young adults flock to these places because there they find relationships with peers, love, and acceptance. Examine the popular shows on television—many of them focus not on exciting events or a riveting plot, but on the relationships between a small group of young adults.

Young people of our society are into small groups, but the benefits of small groups aren't restricted to young peo-

ple. Small groups have so much to offer to people of any age. Accountability, support, and encouragement are best found in small groups and cannot adequately happen in Sunday school classes of over 20 people or in worship services where hundreds of people meet. In our church we have seen six small groups begin among adults ages 45 and up over the course of the past nine months, and plans are being made to begin four to six additional groups among this age population. Small groups are not just for young people.

***Myth #4—Small groups are dangerous to the health of the body, often leading to church splits or degenerating into a place where people gather to criticize the pastor and church leadership.***

Some churches fear small groups because of the lack of control they perceive the church to have over these groups. It is true that some churches have had negative experiences with small groups. However, much of the fear of groups degenerating into places where the pastor and church leaders are criticized is alleviated when small groups are functioning for pro-active reasons and with the blessing of the church. Groups that begin as a reaction against what is happening in the local church are destined to inflict damage. Groups that begin as an extension of the ministry of the local church body will bear much more positive fruit.

God is moving in our local church in exciting ways and we anticipate an even more exciting future. We believe that God wants to use us as part of his plan to reach the Mechanicsburg area for Christ. This idea of revival is an exhilarating thought until one considers the implications of a pastoral staff and deacon team carrying all of the ministry responsibilities upon their shoulders. Most churches are not structured to handle a mighty move of God. Who would minister to all of the new Christians? In the early church it was small groups/mini churches meeting in homes which allowed 3,000+ new believers to be absorbed into a church which previously consisted of between 120 and 500 believers.

It is this realization that compels me

as a pastor to recruit, train, and equip godly men and women for small group leadership. Our community group leaders are growing to accept the realization that God is calling us to be ready for him to bring large numbers of pre-Christians into our midst. As his church, we have an obligation to be preparing to minister to whomever he may bring.

## **Conclusion**

As a pastor, I am blessed by small groups in the life of our church in a number of ways. (We currently have 26 groups which minister to over 225 adults in the life of our church and we project to have 40 groups ministering to over 300 adults by the end of this year.)

First, I see people's needs of all sorts being met in our community groups. It is reassuring to recognize that people's needs are being met above and beyond what I as a pastor or we as a staff could ever do.

Second, I count it a great privilege to have the opportunity of developing godly leadership for ministry in the life of our groups. It is so satisfying to see lay people minister through small groups.

Third, I am anticipating God using our community groups increasingly to draw pre-Christians into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of our groups are strongly focusing on outreach, but I believe we have barely scratched the surface of what God has in store for us.

Finally, I have the opportunity of being personally involved in a community group. My wife and I are blessed to be part of a small group, led by a lay couple in our church, where our spiritual, emotional, and physical needs are met and where we partner with peers in ministry to others and in evangelizing our town for Christ.

Small groups are about life change—discipling those who are in our churches and equipping and motivating them to impact the lives of pre-Christians in our communities.

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*Layne Lebo is on the pastoral staff of the Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Brethren in Christ Church.*



**D**uring the month of October, banners were displayed on the walls of our church—banners inviting Jesus to visit our town, to light the fire in our hearts, to set our hearts ablaze, and to open our eyes to see the harvest. Some banners asked God for the keys to our community, to open doors, and others invited the Lord Jesus to come. Banners declared our desire to carry the fire in our hearts into our city and to fast to the Lord of the harvest.

Reasons for this fast were many: to give God control over certain areas of our lives (which in some cases may have been out of control); to have more time to pray for our community; to pray for "Top 5 Souls Most Wanted for the Kingdom of God"; to enter into the heart of God so that the heart of God might enter the world; to

move us beyond the earthly; to deny our human appetites so that God might feed us with divine appetites; to be shaped, changed and conformed into the image of God's son; to reveal areas of weakness in us; to hear God's heart and feel his yearnings; to reveal where the enemy is defeating us; to gain a passion for the lost; and, last but not least, to "Be still and know that I am God."

We heard about this subject from the pulpit. We had discussions about it in our Sunday school classes, and we talked about it in groups and with individuals. We read about it in our bulletins and in our newsletter. We were encouraged to pray for the pre-Christians and the unchurched in preparation for our Friend's Day, held each year on the last Sunday of October.

God speaks to us in profound and deep ways as we pull ourselves away from the "stuff" of this world

and long for him to do a special work in us. As I heard about the variety of things that people were giving up, I thought it would be interesting to collect these ideas and share them with readers of the Visitor.

**U**sually when I think of fasting I think of food, but I think some of these were probably harder to fast than food. As you will note, we came up with a list that went far beyond food. I am sure that there are more things that people gave up during October, but here are some of the creative things that people have been doing.

Some have been fasting all three meals, while some skipped breakfast, lunch, or the evening meal. Some have fasted all food except for bread. Others fasted all red meats, chicken and fish. Others fasted desserts, candy, chocolate, or ice cream. For some people this was very difficult when it was something they were used to eating every day. One person suggested that giving up caffeine included their three basic food groups: coffee, coca-cola, and chocolate. Some people ate only fruits and vegetables, while others



# ***Creative fasting...***



ate only these for snacks. Some people decided to drink only water.

Some people gave up an hour of sleep, using this time to let God speak to their heart and life, while others used this time to pray and walk through their neighborhood before sunrise.

Some gave up their snooze alarm, the use of elevators at work, reading all books except the Bible, hunting, projects or hobbies, all T.V., T.V. before 8:00 at night, T.V. during mealtimes, and just fasting time to be alone with God!

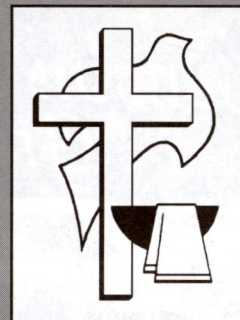
All of these were constant reminders throughout the month. One of the side benefits was the opportunity to explain to others looking on why they were doing or not doing things in their daily routine.

Not only will this time of fasting make a difference in our community, but hopefully it has already made a difference in our own individual lives. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:24-25).

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*Marlene Lebo is a member of the Mechanicsburg (Pa.) congregation.*

# "Time Out" for Fasting and Prayer



*Begin the year intimately  
with God*

**JANUARY 5-12, 1997**

*An invitation from the  
Leadership Council to*

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| ◆ Repent  | ◆ Release  |
| ◆ Resist  | ◆ Receive  |
| ◆ Restore | ◆ Recommit |
| ◆ REJOICE |            |

**Cooperate with God for revival!**

*"The first and only thing that will work is the last  
thing we try...prayer." (Chuck Swindoll)*

Note: A special mailing to all pastors will provide ideas for this week based on recent personal and congregational Brethren in Christ experiences and other resources.

# *for the glory of God*





*Why do pictures of little country churches often grace Christmas cards, but megachurch facilities never do?*

# What's so special about the small-town church?

by Ron Klassen and John Koessler

Have you ever thought about why pictures of little country churches often grace Christmas cards, but megachurch facilities never do? Or why is it such a high compliment for a visitor to a big suburban church to say, "This feels like a small church?" Yes, there is something special about the small-town church.

Why then do so many small-town churches feel inferior to larger churches in cities and suburbs? That's easy to answer. It's because big churches can do so much more. After all, what small church can put together a mass choir? How many small churches can hire a youth pastor, a children's director, a director of senior adult ministries, or a full-time minister of music?

Both of us, as pastors of small-town churches, have at times tried to

imitate larger suburban churches. The result? Our churches didn't feel like big churches, and in the process of imitating someone else, we lost some of what makes the small-town church so special. We discovered that there are some things big churches can do best and some things small churches can do best. For any church to be all it can be, it has to make the most of its strengths.

## Big tractor, little tractor

Most farmers have at least two tractors: one large, one small. The big tractor is better for some jobs, the little tractor for others. Trying to mow a ditch with a big tractor is an exercise in frustration, but a small tractor does the job handily. Plowing a large field with a small tractor would take forever, but a large tractor can make short work of it. The smart farmer uses each tractor for the jobs it does best.

Just as it is foolish to use a small tractor to do a big tractor's job, it is counterproductive to imitate large-church programs in small churches. The small church that tries to become a scaled-down version of a big church

will become a pale imitation of a big church.

The small church is at its best when it makes the most of those qualities that make the small church special—intimacy and involvement.

## The First I—Intimacy

While the large church scrambles to find ways to encourage warmth and personal relationships, the small church, if it is healthy, naturally has a family atmosphere. Large churches work to create small-group ministries; in the small church, many small-group dynamics occur spontaneously. In the large church, many faces are unfamiliar; in the small church, everyone knows everyone else. In a large church, an usher passes a note to the pastor who then announces, "A brown Ford, license TM3527, has its lights on." The pastor of a small church looks out the window and says, "Jim, you left your lights on."

Anyone who has belonged to a healthy small church has many memories of warmth and intimacy. One of our favorites is of the holiday we (Ron and Roxy) awoke to find ourselves snowed in with no electricity or

*Adapted with permission from **No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church** by Ron Klassen and John Koessler (Baker 1996). After many years of pastoring small-town churches, Ron is now General Director of the Rural Home Missionary Association in Morton, Illinois, and John is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.*



phones. Church friends had invited us to spend the day at their home, but with the road buried under knee-deep snow, we resigned ourselves to spending a lonely day at home.

We were feeling depressed and disappointed when, about noon, we heard a knock at our back door. There stood the twenty-one-year-old son of our friends. He and his dad had spent the last four hours on two tractors, clearing the way from their ranch to the main road so they could get to our house. This warm friendliness is a big part of what large churches are hoping to recreate when they try to cultivate a small-church atmosphere.

### The Second I—Involvement

As an organization gets larger, the level of participation usually goes down. Eighty percent or more of the members of a small church often have designated ministry responsibilities, while most larger churches feel fortunate if thirty to forty percent of their members accept specific assignments.

Before Scott and Lyn began worshipping at Valley Chapel where I (John) was pastoring, they attended a larger congregation of about 300. Though they had grown up in that church, neither had been very involved in its ministries. When I asked why, they said they hadn't felt needed.

They both quickly got involved in Valley Chapel. Lyn worked with several of our children's ministries and later volunteered to type the church bulletin. Scott became a leader in our midweek children's program and used his mechanical skills to keep the church's lawn mower in shape.

To some extent, intimacy and involvement happen spontaneously in the small church, but a church can also intentionally build on these qualities.

### Using Your Two I's

We have often heard pastors of small churches complain about what their churches cannot do in their worship services because of their size. But the small church makes a mistake if it tries to copy a large-church worship style. Rather, the small church

needs to shape its worship to capitalize on what the small church does best.

In no other area is the small church tempted to feel inferior to the large church than in the area of music. We look at the megachurches' big choirs, keyboard artists, and great talent and think, "If only we had just a little bit of that in our church."

True worship, though, is not a performance. A friend of ours who has served as the minister of music in several large churches points out that some large churches fall into a trap of approaching their music with a performance mentality that hinders worship. Good worship is not a fancy sound system or talented soloists or professional instrumentalists. The best worship takes place simply when all the people participate in ascribing worth to God. How can a small church encourage everyone to participate in worship?

- **Special vocal music.** The big church only lets people on the platform if they can sing well. The small church that follows that policy will seldom have special music. Plus, this flies in the face of maximizing involvement. Warren Wiersbe describes the attitude called for in the small church:

*If the players and singers are doing their best, and seeking to do better, then God accepts their "sacrifices of praise" and so should we.... Whenever I am listening to a below-average presentation, I imagine my Lord receiving it and presenting it to the Father; and that changes my attitude completely.\**

- **Special music by children.** The small church should invite children to play instruments or sing, even though their music is less than perfect. Everyone forgives children when they make mistakes. Plus, parents will think, "If our family was in a large church, they would not let my daughter play a piano solo."

- **Special music by families.** Both of us have heard family music presentations that, though full of imperfections, connected powerfully with

the audience. To the small church's credit, the congregation is more interested in giving people opportunities to participate than it is in judging those who participate.

- **Congregational singing.** The small church cannot have a mass choir, but neither can the large church sing around the piano. The informality of the small church can make congregational singing something truly special. Instead of always announcing a hymn and then asking everyone to stand to sing it, sing several songs or choruses in a row. Choose the most singable songs, whatever your congregation sings best. Slides or an overhead projector get people to look up to sing rather than burying their heads in hymn books.

- **Leading worship.** Consider forming a worship team to share in leading worship. Encourage broad participation in all parts of the worship service, such as scripture reading, praying, and taking the offering. Young people especially should be encouraged to take part. This is excellent training for future ministry.

- **Sharing time.** Small churches can easily include testimonies and sharing times in their services. In our impersonal world, people feel a deep need to have a place to share their experiences, yet such sharing is almost impossible in a large-church worship service. In the small church, personal sharing in the service can lead to powerful ministry.

What's special about the small-town church is its two I's—intimacy and involvement. In a world where most people feel like faces in the crowd, many are longing for intimacy more than polished performance, for involvement more than spectator status, for small rather than big. By focusing on what it does best, the small church can be there for people who are hungering for a personal touch in an impersonal age.

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\*Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson 1986), 172.





# Bicycle tour to Nepal

by S. N. Rai

*In 1956, S. N. Rai with three companions travelled to Nepal by bicycle. Their entry into the country was one of the earliest efforts of the Brethren in Christ in Bihar Province to reach the people of Nepal with the gospel. S. N. Rai wrote a short account of the trip which was published in the March 11, 1957, issue of the **Evangelical Visitor** (reprinted here in abbreviated form).*

Every area of New India is progressing. Even in spreading the gospel there are new methods. Preachers are discussing new ways of presenting the gospel. After such a discussion, three of us decided we would go on a bicycle tour north to Nepal, taking with us bedding, clothes, and gospel literature. Nepal is about 50 miles to the north of Barjora Station.

Our aim was to present the gospel in every village, bazaar, and town on both sides of our route. We desired to contact as many people as possible up to and within the borders of Nepal. Until recently Nepal has been closed

to the gospel, but now the opportunities for personal witnessing are unlimited.

With the prayers of the church backing us, on November 14, three members of the Saharsa District, Arthur Singh, D. N. Singh, and Rev. S. N. Roy, started on their journey. From the beginning God was directing us. We went by train to Purnea, taking our cycles with us in the compartment. In Purnea, Patras Hembrom joined us. In this town we had our cycles thoroughly checked, in preparation for the bad roads ahead.

Then on the 16th, we packed our

*Surendra Rai was an intelligent and dedicated leader in the Brethren in Christ Church in India. The following short biographical account is written by his daughter Kanchan who serves as secretary to an Indian government officer in Delhi.*

## Surendra Rai

by Kanchan Rai

S. N. Rai was born on 24 August 1928 in Karmatar, Bihar. He was brought up in a good Christian family. His mother died in 1939 when he was in second standard. He passed his matriculation in 1947, then took his Bible Training from the Theological Bible Seminary in Allahabad from 1948 to 1951.

After completing his training, he went in 1951 to Monghyr for preaching work. He was ordained to the ministry in 1954 by Bishop Henry N. Hostetter. He did his ministry faithfully and effectively in the churches in North Bihar—at Banmankhi, Purnea, Barjora, Madhipura, but mostly at Saharsa. His ministry was accomplished with great personal and financial sacrifice. He carried heavy responsibility within the church, such as

long-term pastor of the Saharsa Brethren in Christ Church, superintendent of the Saharsa region from time to time, church chairman, and treasurer.

He was an excellent leader to move people from Hindu philosophy and theology to the Christian view. He used to go to the houses of government officials to visit and to invite them to come to church. He distributed Bible portions in many political meetings. He was disturbed by Satan many times—in his ministry, in the illness of his children, in a motorcycle accident, in the opposition of people in the church. But he stood against Satan. His wife, Dorothy Mary Rai, participated and helped him in his ministry.

On the morning of 25 December 1985 at 6:00 a.m. he slipped, and in falling broke the patella in one knee. When he was in bed as a result of the accident, a Hindu friend came to visit him. For three hours, Rev. Rai talked to him about Jesus. At the end, the man believed in Christ and became a Christian. Another friend also was led to Christ after a two-hour visit.

Anaesthesia was administered during the operation on his patella but he never awoke from it. He now would sleep forever. But S. N. Rai was prepared for death and was faithful to the end.





*Surendra Rai and companions ready to depart for Nepal. Left to right: Patras Hembrom, D. H. Singh, Surendra Rai, Arthur Singh. (1956 picture)*

luggage on the backs of the cycles and set out for Nepal. There is one good road up to Nepal, but because we wanted to contact more villagers, we went through the rural areas. The roads were very bad, and there were rivers to cross up to Mirzapur, but nevertheless we were happy to be preaching to so many interested people.

We stopped in Ekra, Mirzapur, Forbesganj, and Jogbani (some of the bigger towns) on our way to Nepal. On the 23rd we crossed the border of Nepal and arrived in the big city of Biratnagar, where there is a mixed population of Nepalis and Biharis. There are no Christians in the city. We did personal work, distributed tracts, and sold two New Testaments. Open preaching is not allowed, but the people surrounding the city asked us to come to their villages to tell them about Christ. Perhaps in the future we will be able to do more work in the city.

We returned to Bihar and stopped for two days in Birpore, where previously there was only a small village. Now this town is the headquarters for the Kosi River Project. The roads there are now paved, and the people

have electricity. We preached, gave personal witness, and distributed literature in the town and in the rural market places. If it be God's will, we hope to open a preaching center here.

For about three weeks we were gone, arriving home on December the

2nd. We traveled 300 miles, distributed tracts and preached in about 200 villages, and gave personal witness to at least 500 people. We trust that God will add his blessing to the work which was done, and give fruit for his glory. ■

### **Brethren in Christ World Missions Bequests**

If you want to remember Brethren in Christ World Missions in your will, here is a guide to the legal language you need to use.

**USA:** I give to Brethren in Christ World Missions of the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ, a Pennsylvania not-for-profit corporation located in Grantham, Pennsylvania,

- percentage,
- the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars,
- or the following described property,

to be expended for the appropriate objectives of the mission.

**Canada:** I give to Brethren in Christ World Missions of the Canadian Conference Brethren in Christ of Canada, Inc., having its headquarters in Lowbanks in the Province of Ontario, its successors and assigns, the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars; and I direct that the receipt of the Treasurer of said Mission shall be a sufficient discharge for the legacy so paid in the premises.

*Note: State and provincial regulations may vary, and are subject to revision. You are well advised to work with an attorney in drafting or revising your will. You may also want to contact the Brethren in Christ Stewardship office for assistance.*



# God at work in our world

## "...whatever you did..., you did for me."

*The Missions Auxiliary, formerly the Missions Sewing Auxiliary, serves Brethren in Christ Missions, the Navajo Mission, and Lifeline Ministries in many practical ways. Read the thank-you notes from missionaries as their expressions for your involvement with the Auxiliary.*

**Mary Biser, Macha Nursing School, Zambia**—Thank you so much for the gift of \$110 for curtain material for the Nursing School Dining Room! We're excited to once again have curtains in the dining room. It makes it more attractive. It will add to meal time and parties that are often held there! The money will be sufficient for material, thread, hooks, etc.!

**Don and Becky Shenk, Mtshabezi Mission, Zimbabwe**—We are sending a very belated thank you for the beautiful quilts you gave our children (Amy, Don Jr., and Michelle). I guess it's never too late to say thank you. The quilts have come in very handy. They are on the children's beds. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness!

**Erin Hoffman, Caracas, Venezuela**—Thanks so much for sending me the beautiful quilt. I like it and have already used it! I know a lot of time and effort and thought went into making it. Thanks also to MSA (Missions Auxiliary) for the \$50 I received. This will help me greatly with the cost of buying bedding and towels.

**George K. Kibler, Choma, Zambia**—Thank you for the money you sent. It will be used to purchase lightweight blankets for the missionaries and to buy material to make new curtains for the Bishop's office. Your kindness and consideration of these needs is a blessing to us. It also makes you a part of the work God has called us to here.

**Abe and Irma Pankratz, Macha Mission, Zambia**—With the money your Auxiliary sent us, I purchased drapery

material for the teachers' lounge and the headmasters' office. The drapes they had were just in shreds. Thank you so much for your kindness.

## Grab the chance

*Leslie Book—Bogota, Colombia*

Julian, a young man from the Niza 9 church, brought a friend, Andres, to church services earlier this year. Andres' story is that he was dropped off at an orphanage (as a baby or a young child). He grew up there, but within the last number of years, he ran away. Andres makes his living washing cars. He was sleeping in a small "room" in a building, a space behind the foot of a stairwell. The space originally was used for storage, but more recently a dog had been staying there. With no mattress or blanket, Andres used a ruana (a wool poncho) for cover. He bathed daily with a small tin of cold water.

While walking his dog, Julian met Andres, who started to ask him questions. When Julian told this to his mom, his mom told him to grab the chance God was giving him to minister to the young man. That is what Julian did. Julian's mother makes Andres a lunch daily, which Andres insists on paying for. She refuses the money, but Andres tells her that he is not a parasite and he would be paying for his lunch anywhere else. Julian's family has more or less taken him in. Andres attends the Niza 9 church.

## WANTED: Aarons and Hurs

*John and Kathy Brubaker, Mark, Allen, and Alicia—Bangkok, Thailand*

(John wrote the following in October) We have taken the first steps toward a weekly meeting in our home. Since we first started meeting we have been under intense pressure on just about every front. We have moved into territory that Satan doesn't want to concede! The group has met five times so far, but most of the original members we had have been scattered. In large part we are starting over with a few faithful.

I have been under extraordinary pressure at work due to several high-ranking staff members who apparently resent that I am a Christian. My sense is that they are trying to force me out of Thailand. Kathy has also been dealing with some very difficult issues. We've realized that we can't face a battle of this magnitude by ourselves—we urgently need some faithful brothers and sisters to push back the strongholds of the enemy.

Last week we called each of our contacts and re-invited them to the weekly meeting. We discovered they all had other "important" things to do. Kathy and I knelt and began to pour our hearts out to the Lord—pleading for a few faithful people who we could rely on. When the time came to start the meeting, one gal showed up. We had been praying for her for some time due to relationship problems. As she shared from her heart she emphasized that she came because she felt God wanted her to be committed to the group—that was a quick answer to prayer. Please pray for a 23-year-old college senior. No one in her family is Christian; the only way she can come to church or our home is when she is out for other "errands."

## Retirement years ministry

*Abe and Irma Pankratz served at Macha Secondary Girl's School, Macha Mission, Zimbabwe, following Abe's retirement from public school administration in Ontario, Canada.*

*During their debriefing by Brethren in Christ Mission administrators, the Pankratzes were asked: Give us your evaluation as to what importance the school has on the students who in turn contribute to their church, community, and country. Is something significant happening that is spiritual and lasting?*

Yes, very much so. Having lived with them and being among them, I feel the school has a real important place and it is important for us to recognize that and to assist where we can. I think I must have been there for at least 500 devotionals in the morning. I always went. I didn't miss more than ten a year. I must have pre-



sented at least 100 devotionals during the three years. God always gave me a topic that was relevant, that the girls responded to intensely. If I had an especially evangelical devotional, I told the girls that if they wished to know more they could come over and I would give them a pamphlet. I gave out many pamphlets. Often they wanted one for a friend.

I asked the girls to write a composition on the highlights and disappointments of term three. They would repeatedly highlight the fact that at Macha they had devotions every morning. Some girls came from paganism. We would hear many shrieks from the girls at night when they were being attacked by the demons and then we would hear a chorus of prayer. The girls knew the power of God at work among them. They needed support and we gave them that support.

I taught Sunday school for three years. I preached to a whole youth group. The regular speaker didn't show up, so they asked me at the last moment to address the youth retreat. I spoke on "Living More Victoriously"; what do we do when people are sick; boy/girl relationships; modern music; etc. We identified the enemy in the world. The enemy was their sinful nature, the world, and the devil. They thought I had hit the nail on the head.

*All of us were thrilled when you wrote about the period of revival in your student body. Do you feel an impact is being made on the church and community because of Macha Secondary School?*

Throughout the year, we and the staff prepared them for revival. When revival week came, they knew what it was all about. They needed good solid biblical teaching—discipleship teaching. Since we have been home, two of the girls wrote and said, "We miss your devotionals." The Bible teaching is really crucial at this point. The school has a place in the lives of the girls for Christian growth and for intellectual and emotional growth.

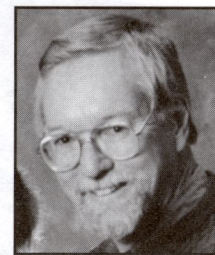
I heard them praying early in the morning. They also take their Bibles and go out to different villages on Saturday. They would say, "We are going out to the villages to bring them the Word of God." They have the language, the culture, and the Word of God.

## Daryl Climenhaga receives grant from the Center for Brethren in Christ Studies

The Center for Brethren in Christ Studies has recently awarded a grant of \$500 to assist Daryl Climenhaga in his on-going studies of the Brethren in Christ churches in Africa.

The grant helps to provide funding for a trip to Zimbabwe to study the influence of the pentecostal and charismatic movements on the Brethren in Christ in that country. He will investigate an hypothesis which states that this influence is accepted by the young people of the church because it helps them to cope with spiritual, political, and economic crises. Relatedly, the hypothesis states that the influence is rejected by the church's elders who see the movements as a possible bridge back to pre-Christian traditional beliefs.

Daryl Climenhaga received his doctorate in missiology from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1993. Presently he is pastor of the Christian Union



Brethren in Christ Church in Indiana. He serves also as Visiting Professor in Christian Mission at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and as an adjunct faculty member in missions at the Mennonite Brethren Seminary in Fresno, Calif.

The Center for Brethren in Christ Studies is sponsored by Messiah College, the Brethren in Christ Church, and the Brethren in Christ Historical Society. Its home and resource collection is in the archives at Messiah College. Funds for the Center's operation are raised from private sources.

## CALENDAR

### OF REGIONAL AND GENERAL CONFERENCE EVENTS

*Board meetings are held at Grantham, Pa., unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact the denominational office, P.O. Box 290, Grantham, Pa. 17027; phone (717) 697-2634.*

- Dec. 21-Jan. 12 Messiah College Winter Recess
- Dec. 27-30 YouthQuest '96: "Dream Big—Live Large"—Tamiment, Pa.

### 1997

- Jan. 6-12 Mennonite World Conference—Calcutta, India
- Jan. 14-19 International Brethren in Christ Fellowship—Bihar, India
- Jan. 23-25 Messiah College Board of Trustees—Sarasota, Fla.
- Feb. 18-20 Leadership Council
- Feb. 20-22 General Conference Board
- Feb. 27—Mar. 1 Board for World Missions
- Mar. 1 Board for Stewardship Services
- Mar. 7-8 Pacific Reg. Conf.—Pacific Christian Center, Upland, Calif.
- Mar. 11-15 Core Course "Theology of Salvation"—Upland, Calif.
- Mar. 14-15 Central Reg. Conf.—New Vision Fellowship, Waukesha, Wisc.
- Mar. 14-15 Midwest Reg. Conf.—Bethany BIC, Thomas, Okla.
- Mar. 21-22 Atlantic Reg. Conf.—Refton BIC, Refton, Pa.
- Apr. 5 Allegheny Reg. Conf.—Mt. Rock BIC, Shippensburg, Pa.
- Apr. 8 Ministers and Leaders Conference—Messiah College
- Apr. 11-12 Susquehanna Reg. Conf.—Redland Valley BIC, Lewisberry, Pa.
- Apr. 18-19 Canadian Reg. Conf.—Living Faith Comm. Ch., Chatham, Ont.
- Apr. 25-26 Southeast Reg. Conf.—Bethel BIC, Hillsville, Va.
- Apr. 27-28 Board for Media Ministries
- May 17 Messiah College Commencement—Grantham, Pa.



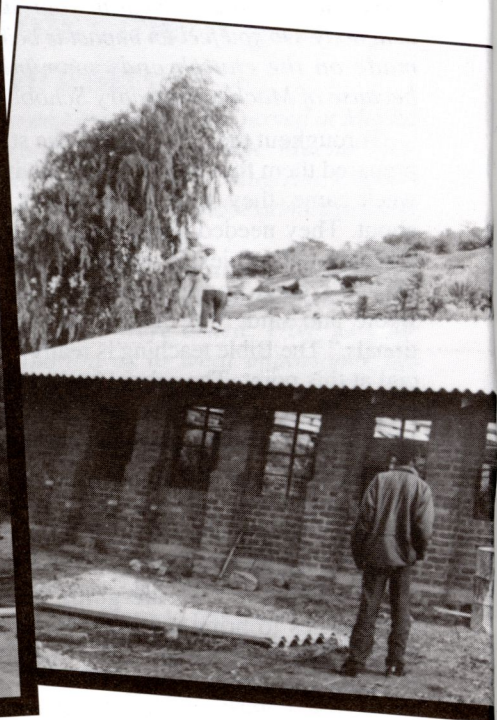
# "PLANT IN ZIM

"Plant and pray in Zimbabwe" was the theme for Missions Prayer Fellowship Project in 1996. The project involved a part, \$10,000 goal.

First, *a stone wall* will be built to protect the Matopo Mission Cemetery. The cemetery has been deteriorating for the past years. With the growth around the Mission, where the cemetery is located, cattle, goats and donkeys wander onto mission land. An attractive stone wall will enable the cemetery to serve as a memorial to those who have died; people whose God's power worked there. It can be a testimony for the present church to remain faithful to the call.

Secondly, *50 benches* are being prepared for the Matopo Church. The benches will furnish one of the new wings added to accommodate the growing numbers of students and community members who worship there. The people worked hard to

*Counter-clockwise from top left: A member window frames installed. ♦ Roof joists in roof. ♦ The exterior plastering is finished*





# AND PRAY "BABWE"

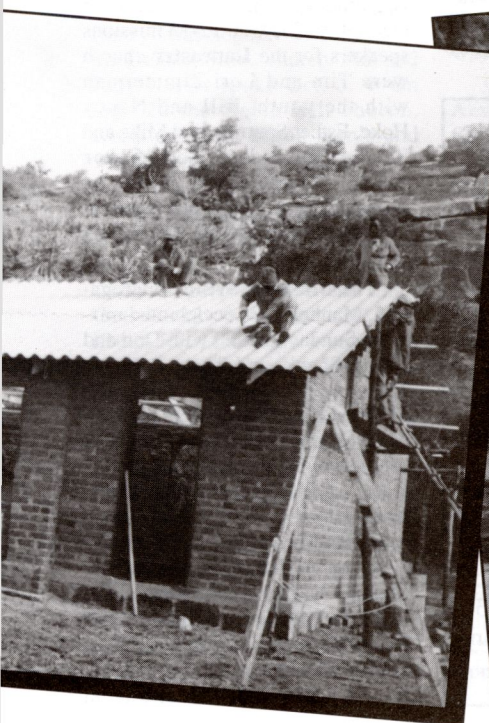
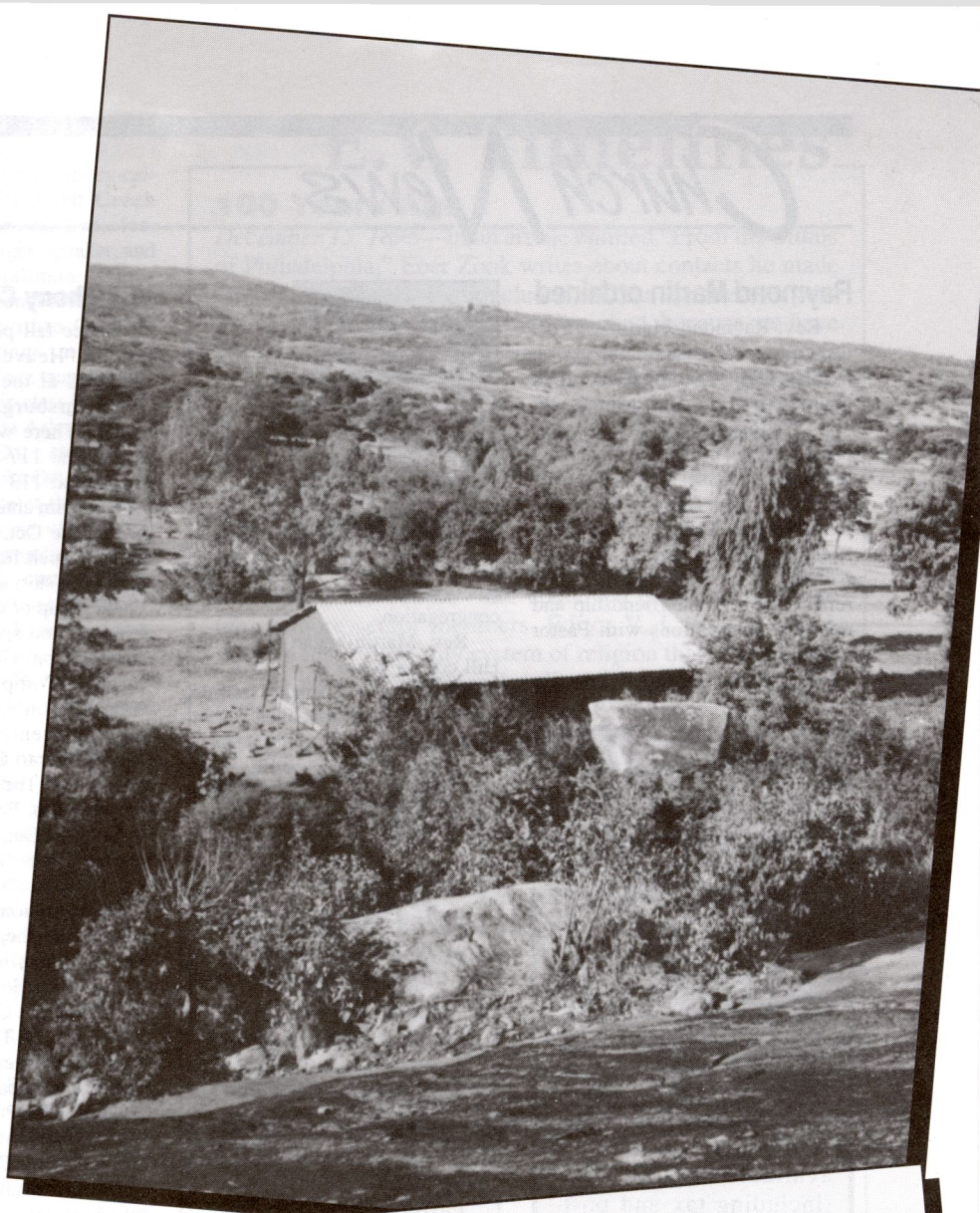
the enough money to furnish the first wing and  
ult are looking forward to using the second  
ee- wing.

ect The final part of the MPF Adult Project is  
ne- **a church building** at Isotsche. A building at  
25 Isotsche will greatly encourage this rural fel-  
po lowship of believers. They struggle with eco-  
ore nomic hardship, and drought. Land has been  
dis- donated by the District Council. They will  
ill build with local labor.

led Churches and individuals were encour-  
will aged to give—gratefully, graciously and gen-  
to erously! This they did! The project has been  
tu- fully funded. All phases of "Plant and Pray in  
or- Zimbabwe" will be accomplished because  
ise you gave to the Missions Prayer Fellowship.

Following is a pictorial story of the build-  
ing of the Isotsche Brethren in Christ  
Church. Dedication of the new building took  
place on October 13.

of the church making building stones. ♦ Walls with  
lled on "roofing day." ♦ Completing one side of the  
♦ A panoramic setting of the Isotsche church.





# Church News

## Raymond Martin ordained

Rev. Raymond Martin was ordained to the Christian ministry on Sunday, Oct. 13, at the Bunker Hill congregation, in Martinsburg, W. Va. Bishop John B. Hawbaker preached the sermon and conducted the ordination service. Rev. Earl Brechbill, Rev. Wilbur Besecker, Rev. Steven Munger, and Gene Ruleman, a lay leader from the Bunker Hill congregation, gave reflections on their friendship and ministry associations with Pastor Martin.

Rev. Martin came originally



from the Montgomery congregation. At age 49, he responded to God's call to the ministry and left his

job as a civil engineer. He served a

pastoral internship at the Antrim

congregation.

Rev. Martin began the Bunker Hill congregation as a new church planting. The first Sunday morning worship service was held on December 5, 1993.

Raymond and his wife, Sarah, have two adult sons. Their daughter Nicole lives at home with them.

## Conference on Aging Papers Available

The papers given at the September 1996 Conference on Aging, jointly sponsored by the Center for Brethren in Christ Studies and Messiah Village, are available in the December 1996 issue of Brethren in Christ History and Life.

Copies of the issue are available at \$5.00 each (including tax and postage). Make checks payable to the Brethren in Christ Historical Society, and mail them to:

Brethren in Christ  
Historical Society  
Messiah College  
Grantham, PA 17027

## Staff Person Needed

The Air Hill church is taking applications for an associate pastor to work in needed ministry goals. Areas of need include youth, young adult, seniors, evangelism, and music.

Inquiries should be directed to:

Pastor John C. Bundy  
Air Hill Brethren in  
Christ Church  
7041 Cumberland Hwy.  
Chambersburg, PA  
17201

Phone (717) 267-3373  
(church) or 263-9044 (parsonage)

## Messiah College Campus Pastor

Responsible for chapel and campus ministries at Messiah College. Messiah College is a selective Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences enrolling over 2,400 undergraduate students. Starting date is July 1, 1997. Please address all inquiries, applications, and nominations to:

Donald B. Kraybill, Provost  
Messiah College  
Grantham, PA 17027

## Allegheny Conference

Three fall performances of the drama "Heaven's Gates, Hell's Flames" at the Air Hill church, Chambersburg, Pa., drew 1,700 adults. There were 230 invitation responses: 117 first-time commitments and 113 recommitments. ♦ The Antrim church, Chambersburg, hosted the Oct. 24 church growth dinner which featured music, testimonies, a skit, and offering. ♦ The youth group of the Chambersburg congregation sponsors a five-year-old boy from Haiti at \$24 a month through Compassion Int'l. The congregation spent three October Sunday evenings looking at the topic "How to Care for Our Aging Society." ♦ The Five Forks church, Waynesboro, Pa., had a three-hour prayer vigil Oct. 11. A teacher training night was Oct. 15 with Harvey Payne.

The mission conference theme Oct. 5-6 at the Hollowell church, Waynesboro, was "Teach Me to Weep" with Henry Ginder, Fannie McBeth, Dave Carlson, and Jay and Judy Smith. ♦ The pastor and seven members of the Martinsburg, Pa., church participated in the October six-mile CROP Walk. Charles and Elaine Norman from Kansas were evangelists for Oct. 20-24 meetings. ♦ Milford Brubaker led Nov. 8-10 revival meetings for the Mt. Tabor church, Mercersburg, Pa. The Master's Four sang in the Oct. 13 morning service. ♦ On Oct. 20 the New

Guilford congregation, Chambersburg, had a Festival of Praise with narrations and music.

## Atlantic Conference

Editor of Prism magazine, Dwight Ozard, was the Nov. 3 speaker for the Circle of Hope congregation, Philadelphia, Pa. ♦ The Flock Class of the Conoy congregation, Elizabethtown, Pa., went Oct. 13-15 to New Life Bible Camp Retreat. ♦ On Oct. 27 Abe and Mildred Yoder were missions speakers for the Cross Roads congregation, Mount Joy, Pa. ♦ Bluegrass musicians Sweetwater Reunion were guests for the Oct. 19 Saturday Circle of the Elizabethtown church. ♦ The summer outreach team of the Fairland church, Cleona, Pa., spoke Oct. 20 about their experiences in Perry County. ♦ On Oct. 13 Roger Witter told the Free Grace congregation, Millersburg, Pa., about his work team efforts in Nicaragua.

A recent "day apart" for women of the Hempfield church, Lancaster, Pa., featured Elizabeth Nissley speaking on the sandwich generation. ♦ The Hershey, Pa., congregation had a clothing sale Oct. 19 for the deacon's ministry. On three October Thursdays the church hosted the MMA "Successful Money Management" seminar. ♦ The Hummelstown, Pa., church planned an outdoor "stone soup" meal for Oct. 19. ♦ The Oct. 12-13 missions speakers for the Lancaster church were Tim and Lori Zimmerman with the youth, Bill and Nancy Hoke, Esther Spurrier, and Mike and Sherry Holland. ♦ The Manor church, Mountville, Pa., promoted participation in National Pornography Awareness Week, beginning Oct. 27.

The Mastersonville congregation, Manheim, Pa., celebrated missions Sunday Oct. 20 with Don and Becky Shenk, and Thata Book. ♦ The young adults of the Millersville, Pa., church planned rock climbing for Oct. 13. ♦ A "Halleluia Night" with games and snacks on Oct. 31 at the Montoursville, Pa., church replaced usual Halloween activities. ♦ The youth of the Mt. Pleasant church, Mount Joy, had a barn party at the Kopp farm Nov. 1. ♦ The second anniversary celebration Oct. 20 at the New Hope church, Harrisburg, Pa., included Spirit Sound from

## Position Available

Manor Brethren in Christ Church, Lancaster, Pa., has an opening in 1997 for a full-time Minister of Youth. This is your opportunity to lead a program of 200. Qualifications include: proven experience, administrative and relational skills, and the ability to mentor volunteers. Musical abilities will be considered a major plus. Request a profile or submit your resume to: Manor Church Youth Search, 530 Central Manor Road, Lancaster, PA 17512.



Messiah College and the sermon, "You Are the Salt—Not the Sugar—of the Earth." ♦ The women of the **New Joy** church, Akron, Pa., began a study Oct. 9 on "Parenting—Not Just a Stroll in the Park."

The **Palmyra**, Pa., church held a retreat at Kenbrook Bible Camp Oct. 4-6. ♦ Mike Holland preached Oct. 13 at the **Pequea** church, Lancaster, on "The Power of the Gospel." ♦ The Love Bunch puppet ministry of the **Refton**, Pa., church participated in the anniversary celebration Oct. 6 of Bright Hope Church. ♦ On Oct. 20 the **Silverdale**, Pa., church had homecoming, building dedication, and a meal. Dawn Geib was installed Oct. 13 as pastor of youth and young adults. ♦ Terry Brensinger recently challenged the board and deacons of the **Skyline View** church, Harrisburg, to examine how they nurture the church toward discipleship. ♦ On Oct. 6 the **Summit View** church, New Holland, Pa., had a dinner and teacher training event which ran concurrently with videos for non-participants.

## Canadian Conference

John Zuck led a love feast and revival meetings Oct. 19-23 for the **Bertie** congregation, Stevensville, Ont. ♦ The **Boyle** church, St. Ann's, Ont., held renewal services with David Illman Oct. 20-22, with musicians Kathy Kiss, Sweetwater, and Brenda Flanagan. ♦ The **Bridlewood** congregation, Agincourt, Ont., had a 12-hour prayer vigil Oct. 5. ♦ A family of five was baptized this fall at the **Cross Roads** church, Guelph, Ont. ♦ A "fellows fishing frenzy" was Sept. 27-29 for men of the **Delisle**, Sask., church. Phil and Judy Keefer spoke Oct. 6. ♦ On Oct. 20 the **Heise Hill** church, Gormley, Ont., began men's and women's ministry groups and a *Life With God* study series.

The **Houghton** church, Langton, Ont., raised \$11,000 at their annual auction Sept. 28. Paul Graham spoke on prophecy and end times Oct. 20-22. ♦ On Oct. 27 Mrs. Eldon Kraus brought a report on MDS to the **Kindersley**, Sask., congregation. ♦ On Oct. 20 Mona Heidebrecht of Compassion Canada led an evening of praise in song for the **Massey Place** church, Saskatoon, Sask. Jack Friebe spoke about Operation Mobilization on Oct. 27. ♦ The **New Life** church, Collingwood, Ont., hosted the Oct. 18-19 Women's Missionary Auxiliary meetings with Lynda Kelly speaking on "Women Who Make a Difference." ♦ Oct. 26 was adult fellowship night at the **Oak Ridges**, Ont.,

church with an Italian dinner and gospel music video.

The Oct. 19-20 anniversary celebration of the **Orchard Creek** church, St. Catharines, Ont., featured Willard Metzger, speaker, and musician Mark Hallman. A new church of Russian believers is emerging from within Orchard Creek with meetings on Sunday evenings. ♦ Karl Fretz taught a five-session membership class in the fall titled "Because You Asked" for the **Port Colborne**, Ont., church. Jay and Judy Smith spoke Oct. 22, 24. ♦ Cal Bombay spoke at the Oct. 27 37th anniversary service of the **Ridgemount** congregation, Hamilton, Ont. The fall sermons theme was "Roadway Through Ephesus." ♦ On Oct. 20 Dan Ryan used puppets, stories, and drama to entertain the children of the **Rosebank** congregation, Petersburg, Ont., during Sunday school.

The women of the **Sherkston**, Ont., church had their secret sisters dinner on Oct. 18. The church had a 7th anniversary/homecoming logo contest. ♦ Six persons were baptized Oct. 13 into the fellowship of the **Springvale**, Ont., church. Pastor Silvestro resumed part-time pastoral duties that day. ♦ Randy Buck was the Oct. 6 guest speaker for the **Upper Oaks** church, Oakville, Ont. Four summer VSers gave reports on Oct. 20. ♦ "Signs of the Second Coming" and "Rediscovering Anabaptism" were two fall Sunday school topics at the **Wainfleet**, Ont., church. ♦ On Oct. 17 Irma Pankrat, recently returned from three years in Africa, spoke at the ladies' "time out."

## Central Conference

On Oct. 19 the men of the **Amherst** congregation, Massillon, Ohio, had breakfast at Das Dutch Kitchen and heard speaker Dale Bifonet. ♦ The **Beulah Chapel** congregation, Springfield, Ohio, recently collected items to send to Russian orphans. ♦ The Kingdom Kids (grades 3-6) of the **Fairview** church, Englewood, Ohio, doubled their numbers to 62 on Oct. 2, visitor night, with a nature scavenger hunt. ♦ For the first time, the youth of the **Lakeview** church, Goodrich, Mich., beat the adults in the annual softball match-up on Oct. 13 to "much weeping and gnashing of teeth" on the adult bench.

On Oct. 5 Mike and Sherry Holland spoke of their work in Venezuela to the **Mooretown** church, Sandusky, Mich. A fellowship meal Oct. 27 helped celebrate Pastor Appreciation Month. ♦ In Oct. 27 morning and evening services, The

# E.V. Timelines

## 100 Years Ago

*December 15, 1896*—In an article entitled "From the Slums of Philadelphia," Eber Zook writes about contacts he made on Lombard Street. He concluded, "I fear that we as a people will be found wanting when weighed, because we have been so long asleep and doing comparatively nothing for the rescue of the perishing. If we have the Christ spirit in us, we cannot help doing *something*. If God has not called us into the field, we have a part to do by standing under the arms of those who are going, both by our prayers and by our means."

## 75 Years Ago

*December 19, 1921*—This Christmas number was dedicated "To Our Older People" and contained contributions from ten or more senior members. Editor V. L. Stump noted, "Christianity is the only system of religion that has ever had any place for old people and children. I suppose it is because both are more or less helpless, and Christianity is the only thing that has ever undertaken to help the helpless."

## 50 Years Ago

*December 30, 1946*—Editor Jesse W. Hoover looked toward the new year with concern for the direction of churches in general and the Brethren in Christ specifically: "Unless there is a really overwhelming revival of Spirit-filled readiness to follow explicitly every Heaven-sent direction, the Brethren in Christ Church is only a little behind the rest of the crowd. If there is any doubt in any mind as to the authenticity of that statement, you should have access but briefly to the intimate inner councils. Issues are no longer settled clearly on conviction or principle, but primarily on expediency. There cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt with some of us that the apostasy is farther advanced than most of us had supposed...."

## 25 Years Ago

*December 10, 1971*—In an editorial titled "There's a Bit of the Pharisee Around," John E. Zercher wrote: "I recall a pastor's account of his being criticized for his failure to 'preach on sin.' So, one Sunday he preached on sin—sin(s) in the common usage of the term. He relates how disturbed he was by the favorable comments he received...[which came] from those of his congregation whose general attitude was judgmental and rigid. In their lives was lacking the compassion and caring that won for our Lord the title, 'friend of publicans and sinners.'"

## 10 Years Ago

*December 1986*—The editorial summarized the central theme of the 80-page book, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, featuring the Herdman family—six children who showed up for church in the mistaken belief that refreshments were served every Sunday, and volunteered for every major part of the Christmas pageant. "Imogene, for instance, didn't know that Mary was supposed to be acted out in one certain way—sort of quiet and dreamy and out of this world. The way Imogene did it, Mary was a lot like Mrs. Santoro at the Pizza Parlor...[who] yells and hollers and hugs her kids and slaps them around.... 'Get away from the baby!' she yelled at Ralph, who was Joseph. And she made the Wise Men keep their distance."



Covenant Players brought their special brand of drama to the **Nappanee**, Ind., congregation. ♦ The youth of the **Northgate Fellowship**, Tipp City, Ohio, had a fund raiser recently at the West Milton Quaker Heritage Festival. ♦ Dr. Luke Keefer spoke in both services Oct. 20 for Friend Day at the **Pleasant Hill**, Ohio, church. His evening topic was "Faith in God: From Heart to Hands." ♦ The **Wooster**, Ohio, church has an alternative worship service on Saturday nights.

### Midwest Conference

The **Abilene**, Kan., church has a "Fit for Jesus" women's exercise program twice a month. ♦ On Oct. 11, 228 people attended the banquet at the **Bethany** church, Thomas,

Okla., put on by Gospel Echoes Mennonite Prison Ministry. On Oct. 18-20, 62 attended family camp at Boiling Springs State Park. ♦ On Oct. 16 Daydawn was in concert at the **Rosebank** church, Hope, Kan., with music, drama, magic, and puppets. Adrian Despres led renewal services Oct. 27-30. ♦ Pastor Ron and Kerry Bowell and Carol Hoover of the **Zion** congregation, Abilene, presented a seminar Oct. 21 at Emmanuel Church called "Surviving Adolescence from a Parent's Point of View."

### Pacific Conference

The **Chino**, Calif., church hosted a concert Nov. 2 by Rick and Cathy Riso. ♦ Dennis McLean of the Gideons and John Hollingsworth

spoke in the Oct. 6 service of the **Pacific Highway** church, Salem, Ore. ♦ Pianist Mark Zeeman was in concert Oct. 6 at the **Upland**, Calif., church. ♦ The **Walnut**, Calif., congregation had an all-saints feast at the pastor's residence Nov. 1, celebrating those witnesses who have gone before.

### Southeast Conference

The youth of the **Highland Park** church, Dublin, Va., helped paint during an Oct. 5 workday at Dublin Crisis Pregnancy Center. They also hosted a taco salad lunch Oct. 6 to support their Bolivian child through World Vision Int'l. ♦ On Oct. 13, Pastor Gramm of the **Holden Park** congregation, Orlando, Fla., shared about his trip to Honduras to deliver

motorcycles to pastors through Missionary Ventures and Christian Motorcyclists Association. ♦ Warren Toler of the Church of the Nazarene led revival/homecoming services Oct. 16-20 for the **Millerfields** congregation, Columbia, Ky.

### Susquehanna Conference

Curtis Bryant led fall revival services Oct. 6-13 for the **Big Valley** congregation, Belleville, Pa. ♦ The **Carlisle**, Pa., church had small group training sessions for the STEP ministry Oct. 31—Nov. 2. ♦ On Oct. 6 the **Cedar Grove** congregation, Mifflintown, Pa., viewed "The Reluctant Prophet" about Charles Colson. ♦ Lane Hostetter conducted renewal meetings Oct. 6-9 for the **Dillsburg**, Pa., congregation. The

## Money Matters

# God and my finances: Unfinished after 90 years

by Henry N. Hostetter

### First of a Two-Part Account

When I was a boy, soon after the turn of the century, money was not a big deal around our home. Each of us children had a small bank in which we placed our pennies, nickels, and dimes. Maybe once during the summer we'd go shopping in Columbia. At Christmas we sometimes went to Lancaster to see the decorations and to buy a present or two. We had no Christmas tree, but the Christmas story and the exchange of a few presents gave us happy and joyous Christmas and New Year occasions.

Because the closest high school was five miles away and no bus was provided, continued education was not possible. However, Father and Mother gave the younger children opportunity for two years of study at our church school, Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home at Grantham.

In those days it was common practice for parents to give their sons of courting age a horse and buggy. But the coming of the automobile and our education at Messiah changed this pattern. We had higher priorities and broader interests, especially in Christian service.

The Brethren in Christ mission center in Lancaster had an afternoon Sunday school which many of our church youth attended. This, plus the youth activities in our rural churches, fostered a wholesome min-

gling of Christian youth. During these interactions a friendship grew between Beula Viola Hess and me that eventually led to marriage. But in the first years of marriage I was faced with many money problems.

Since boyhood I had worked in farming, so it was natural for me to work as a farmhand. Working for a brother-in-law was satisfactory, except that I had employment only nine months of the year. Also, because in those days a woman could not be so employed after marriage, Beula resigned from a good office job in Lancaster.

It was not then uncommon for Lancaster County farmers to offer nine-month employment. For many hired hands, this was not a problem. After the tobacco crop was stripped and sold, they found seasonal work in warehouses packing the tobacco. But my brother-in-law had chosen not to farm tobacco. And if he had, I likely would not have hired to him. Years before, my father had chosen, for conscience' sake, to discontinue farming tobacco. So I was not prepared to violate my conscience by working in the warehouses.

Because I was unemployed and unable to support the household (then the husband's sole responsibility), the first two years of married life left me with deep feelings of frustration. Even today, I feel keenly that many followers of Christ take too lightly the desperate feelings of the unemployed and the frustrations of the homeless.

After serving two years as a hired

### Cooperative Ministries

Receipts, Year to Date January 1—October 31, 1996

	United States		Canada	
	1996	1995	1996	1995
<b>Proportionate</b>	<u>1,590,156</u>	<u>1,593,460</u>	<u>263,909</u>	<u>325,632</u>
Congregational	1,518,339	1,439,956	263,909	325,495
Individual	71,817	153,504	0	137
<b>Designated and Direct Giving</b>	<u>491,118</u>	<u>574,675</u>	<u>10,820</u>	<u>16,374</u>
Congregational	204,492	304,012	7,404	3,313
Individual	286,626	270,663	3,416	13,061
<b>Total to Date</b>	<u>2,081,274</u>	<u>2,168,135</u>	<u>274,729</u>	<u>342,006</u>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<u>3,781,056</u>	<u>3,735,410</u>	<u>472,000</u>	<u>510,000</u>
<b>Received to Date</b>	55%	58%	58.2%	67%



church recently culminated its three-year building campaign with commitments exceeding the goal and giving exceeding commitments. ♦ The **Fairview** congregation, New Cumberland, Pa., recently made and sold 660 hoagies.

The **Grantham**, Pa., church had their groundbreaking and harvest happening on Oct. 12. ♦ The children were asked to wear Bible character or animal costumes to a harvest fest Oct. 26 at the **Green Grove** church, Spring Mills, Pa. ♦ The youth of the **Jemison Valley** church, Westfield, Pa., planned a hayride for Oct. 13 and apple cider making for Oct. 26. ♦ Luke Keefer Jr. spoke Oct. 4-6 to the **Locust Grove** congregation, York, Pa., on "Living Distinctively in the '90s."

The staff of the **Mechanicsburg**, Pa., church committed to pray and fast for 27 days in an "October Fast" in preparation for the Oct. 27 Bring a Friend Sunday. ♦ A music festival Oct. 27 at the **Messiah Village** church, Mechanicsburg; featured the Messiah College Singers and other campus groups. ♦ The youth of the **Redland Valley** church, York Haven, Pa., planned a harvest party for Oct. 18. The congregation's annual pig roast was Oct. 20 after the service. ♦ Tim Beitzel sang at the 15th anniversary service of the **West Shore** church, Mechanicsburg. Terry Brensinger spoke in Oct. 27-30 renewal services. Beth Melhorn began VS at Navajo Mission Oct. 27 as office manager.

## For The Record

### Births

**Almaraz:** Peter Jacob, Sept. 20; Peter and Loretta Almaraz, Walnut congregation, Calif.

**Bricker:** Stephanie Meagan, Oct. 2; Ed and Patti (Timmons) Bricker, Chambersburg congregation, Pa.

**DeGeare:** Reagan Nicole, Oct. 10; David and Kelley (Donaghe) DeGeare, Oklahoma City congregation, Okla.

**Ferrell:** Corey Christopher, Oct. 9; Chris and Melissa (Steffee) Fer-

rell, Pomeroy Chapel congregation, Tenn.

**Flagg:** Stephanie Nicole, Oct. 7; Harry and Mary (Carter) Flagg, Wainfleet congregation, Ont.

**Goodfellow:** Sarah Elizabeth, June 13; Stephen and Kim (Switzer) Goodfellow, Upper Oaks congregation, Ont.

**Hess:** Jordan McKayla, Oct. 24; Duane and Dawn (Enck) Hess, Pequea congregation, Pa.

**Kiss:** Carolyn Grace, Sept. 24; Paul and Claire (Sheffer) Kiss, Westheights congregation, Ont.

**McAllister:** Andrew Scott, Oct. 9; Scott and Julie McAllister, Five Forks congregation, Pa.

**McCool:** Carranda Jo, Sept. 30;

man, we moved to my father's farm following his retirement. We chose the tenant house because, although we did not know where, we felt that we would go into Christian service. Since attending Messiah, I had a desire for mission work in Africa. But the Lord did not call, and that was considered a prerequisite to service in such areas of Christian service.

During the third year of partnership farming, my brother, with whom I shared the farm operation, made an announcement that hit me almost like a bolt of lightning. He said he was leaving the farm at the end of the year for pastoral work.

At that time my father was engaged in revival meetings in Kansas, so I had time to consider his position and mine. I knew if I told him I did not want to farm, he would say I did not need to. And he would sell the farm, even if, because of the low economy we were having, it brought only half price. But because I sensed no specific call to Christian service, I realized I had no alternative but to farm.

We made plans to buy my brother's share in the partnership and to move into the large farmhouse, leaving the tenant house for a reliable older man, our farmhand. However, within four months the local district called for ministerial assistance. And by the end of six months, I was ordained to the ministry.

A year later, we were in the Great Depression. Had we been forced to sell, we would have received hardly half of our investment. But, although finances

were tight, plans moved along smoothly, and no major financial adjustments were necessary. Meanwhile, the challenge was to become an effective part of the official ministry team of the Manor-Pequea District.

In those days of uncertain farm income, sales in the farmers' market became a means of providing cash. Because we had been engaged in retailing farm products, we were familiar with it. But preparing vegetables, fruits, and eggs, and dressing poultry for early-morning marketing each week demanded much time and energy. It also required one of us to stay close by constantly. And Beula was that person. Through the next thirty years, marketing provided a small but dependable income.

During this time, I also began holding revival meetings among the churches several times a year. These and other church activities, local and general, required self-support. This was thirty years before most Brethren in Christ churches and agencies offered regular support. During more than one hundred revival meetings over the years, stipends sometimes barely met my expenses.

Because I was torn between increasing demands on my time for church work and the supervision of the farm, and because Beula needed to be relieved of some of the management responsibilities, we decided to involve the hired man in management. With the assistance of our county agricultural agent, we made an agreement that required no investment from our hired man. Although it also reduced

our income as owners, this operation continued—involving two families—for thirty years.

An assignment by General Conference to visit the mission fields introduced me to a totally different world. The contrast was even greater when we went from Africa to India. In spite of many religious practices, poverty, hunger and filth seemed to be everywhere. Little groups of Christians were scattered here and there, but many, like their neighbors, lived and ate sparingly.

Returning home, I realized I had become directly involved in overseas missions. As a result, I wondered how I could continue to accumulate and yet be Christlike. Could I continue my plans with integrity and yet be involved in helping people so desperately in need?

The Jewish law spoke of the tithe, offerings, lambs, and firstfruits. Jesus said we should leave all and follow him. And we should love our neighbors as ourselves. John the Baptist said if we have two coats, we should give one. After Pentecost, believers appear to have lived out of a common treasury. After my observations abroad, these Scriptures and others spoke more forcibly of the meaning of Christian stewardship.

*To be continued in January 1997*

*In December and January's "Money Matters," Henry N. Hostetter reflects on the topic of Christian finances. A resident of Messiah Village, Henry celebrated his 94th birthday on October 8.*



Curt and Pam McCool, Green Grove congregation, Pa.

**Machamer:** William Allen, Oct. 22; Jeff and Connie Machamer, Hershey congregation, Pa.

**Myers:** Jessica Lynne, Sept. 27; Anthony and Shawna (Fligg) Myers, Air Hill congregation, Pa.

**Pierce:** Elleanna Laurel, Sept. 6; Christopher and Pamela (Gehman) Pierce, Palmyra congregation, Pa.

**Reely:** Emerald Mae, Sept. 25; Rick and Louise Reely, Five Forks congregation, Pa.

**Risser:** Alexis Joy, Oct. 13; Joe and Debra (Sauder) Risser, Manor congregation, Pa.

**Thomas:** Hunter Allen, Sept. 17; Keith and Brenda (Stone) Thomas, Conoy congregation, Pa.

**Wenger:** Matthew James, Aug. 27; Gregg and Chrystal (Corbett) Wenger, Air Hill congregation, Pa.

**Witter:** Justin David, Oct. 5; Greg and Dora (McBeth) Witters, Grantham congregation, Pa.

## Weddings

**Albrecht - Lichti:** Jennifer Anne, daughter of Robert and Anne Lichti, Tavistock, Ont., and Gavin James, son of Harold and Betty Albrecht, Petersburg, Ont., July 13, at Rosebank Brethren in Christ

Church with Rev. Trevor Main officiating. (A correction of an earlier report.)

**Donat - Miller:** Susan Miller, daughter of Shirley and Dale Mussler, Lancaster, Pa., and David, son of Curt and Mary Ellen Donat, Columbia, Pa., June 15, at Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity with Rev. Thomas Karge officiating.

**Eshbach - Hershey:** Melissa Renee, daughter of Collen Hershey and Jerry and Caroll Hershey, and Larry Isaac Jr., son of Larry and Mary Eshbach, Oct. 5, at Pequea Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Roy J. Peterman officiating.

**Geib - Dusza:** Jennifer, daughter of Steven and Darlene Dusza, Sellersville, Pa., and John, son of Fred and Almeda Geib, Silverdale, Pa., Sept. 21, at Souderton Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Fred Geib officiating.

**Harris - Irvin:** Lisa Irvin, State College, Pa., and Patrick Harris, Spring Mills, Pa., Aug. 10, at Green Grove Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Paul Smucker officiating.

**Hart - Fox:** Renata Michelle, daughter of John and Sharon Fox, Ridgeway, Ont., and Michael Paul, son of Ken and Marietta Hart, Sept. 28, at Sherkston Brethren in Christ

Church with Rev. Robert Kentie and Rev. Leonard J. Chester officiating.

**Hoffert - Clemens:** Joanne Clemens, Harleysville, Pa., and Harry A. Hoffert, Quakertown, Pa., Oct. 19, at Silverdale Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Frederick L. Geib officiating.

**Ingrassia - Teal:** Lorraine Teal, Caledonia, Ont., and David Ingrassia, Stoney Creek, Ont., Oct. 19, at Springvale Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Rick Silvestro officiating.

**Miller - Gehr:** Belinda L. Gehr, Lancaster, Pa., and R. Larry Miller, Lancaster, Oct. 12, at Manor Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Greg Funk officiating.

**Renner - Steinrock:** Carolyn Steinrock, Doylestown, Pa., and Donald Renner, Perkasio, Pa., Sept. 14, at the groom's residence, with Rev. Peter Bullock officiating.

**Schiding - Larkin:** Allison B., daughter of Kevin and Bonnie Larkin, Montoursville, Pa., and Ronald E. Jr., son of Ronald and Jeannine Schiding, York, Pa., Oct. 19, at Montoursville Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Gray Herfort officiating.

**Stambaugh - Rickabaugh:** Carol Rickabaugh, daughter of Sam and Mary Wengert, Shippensburg,

Pa., and Charlie, son of Marianna and the late Sherman Stambaugh, York, Pa., Oct. 12, at Air Hill Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. John L. Bundy officiating.

## Obituaries

**Bailey:** Ethel Bailey, born Aug. 27, 1910, daughter of William and Emma Sider Lapp, died Sept. 30. Preceding her in death were her husband, Calvary; a son, Ken; and five brothers and sisters. Surviving are a son, Gerry; two daughters, Jane Mills and Mary Lyons; and two sisters, Hazel Arndt and Bertha Harrington. Ethel delivered tapes to shut-ins and was a member of the sewing circle of the Sherkston congregation, Ont., where she attended regularly. The funeral was at the church with Rev. Leonard J. Chester officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

**Cote:** Kenneth J. Cote, born July 14, 1961, son of Raymond and Joan Chamberland Cote, in Fort Kent, Maine., died Oct. 26. Surviving are his wife, Deborah (Marrone); two sons, Matthew and Phillip; a daughter, Beth Ann; and two sisters, Janice Cote and Charlene Hill. He was a children's Sunday school teacher, former Christian Service Brigade leader, former Greenvillage Youth League coach, and a computer systems analyst for The Brotherhood Relief and Compensation Fund in Harrisburg. The funeral was held at the Air Hill Church where he was a member with Rev. John L. Bundy officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

**Gibble:** Ray Witmer Gibble, born Nov. 11, 1916, son of John S. and Martha Witmer Gibble, died Oct. 10. Surviving are his wife, Laura (Weaver); five daughters, Arlene Gibble, Donna Martin, Jeanette Parr, Joanne Helmuth, and Verna Conklin; nine grandchildren; one great-grandchild; a brother, Charles; and two sisters, Mildred Rineer and Gladys Rogers. Ray was founder and owner of Mrs. Gibble's Poultry, a standholder at the former Columbia Market, and market master at Third Street Columbia Market. He had resided at Messiah Village since September. For several years he was a trustee of the Manor church, Pa., where he was a member. The funeral was held at the church with Rev. Roy J. Peterman and Rev. Robert L. Sheetz officiating. Interment was in Cross Roads Cemetery.

**Grant:** Reta Jean Grant, born June 20, 1923, daughter of Rev. Alonzo and Vera Van Natter, died Oct. 2. Preceding her in death were her husband, John Grant; and a son,

How long does it take for **100** gallons of water  
to go over *Victoria Falls*?



**W**E DON'T HAVE ANY idea. But it's fast. Some things in life happen quickly, but some just take time. Like the world missions efforts of the Brethren in Christ. A century ago we were small, but today we have dedicated missionaries all over the world. That's just one of the reasons the Brethren in Christ will be

**CELEBRATING 100 YEARS**  
*of WORLD MISSIONS in 1998*



Robert. Surviving are a daughter, Mary Sider; 3 sons, Roger, James, and Paul; 16 grandchildren; and 5 great-grandchildren; 3 sisters, Nina Buchner, Lila Chapman, and Verna Hansen; and a brother, Harry Van Natter. Reta and her husband served as deacon couple at the Sherkston, Ont., church. She was active as a teacher and Sunday school superintendent, president of the sewing circle, delivered tapes to shut-ins, and was a cook at Camp Kahquah. The funeral was held at the Sherkston church with Rev. Leonard J. Chester and Rev. Ken Kennedy officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

**Haas:** Rhoda W. Haas, born Apr. 2, 1900, daughter of Amos and Adda Gish Wolgemuth, died Sept. 24. Her spouse, Emanuel Haas, preceded her in death. Surviving are 6 sons, Wilmer E., Paul M., Ronald J., Donald R., J. Lynn, and J. Eugene; 3 daughters, Lois Meily, Rhoda Stutzman, and Darlene Wells; 23 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; 1 great-great-grandchild; and 2 sisters, Mary Heise, and Naomi Riddle. Rhoda was a graduate of Messiah College and had resided at Messiah Village since 1985. The funeral service was held at the Village Chapel where she was a member, with Rev. J. Robert Lehman officiating. Interment was in Grantham Memorial Park.

**Heise:** Milton J. Heise, born June 27, 1917, in Gormley, Ont., son of William and Ida Sider Heise, died July 3. Preceding him in death was a daughter, Connie; and a brother, Edgar. Surviving are his wife, Katie; three children, Donald, Karen, and Brenda; eight grandchildren; and six siblings, Luella Loft-house, Orville, Paul, Arthur, Carl, and Marjorie. The memorial service was held in Borrego Springs, Calif., with Rev. Virginia Fifield officiating.

**Kanode:** Maybelle R. Kanode, born Nov. 3, 1911, daughter of Albert and Clara Kensinger Carper, died Oct. 8. Preceding her in death was her husband, Rev. Isaac Kanode. Surviving are three daughters, Pauline C. Allison, Joanne R. Kanode, and Beth F. Sider; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Maybelle had lived at Messiah Village since 1986 and been a receptionist there. She was a member of the Grantham, Pa., church where the funeral was held with Rev. Mary Jane Davis and Rev. Marion J. Heisey officiating. Interment was in Fairview Cemetery.

**King:** Florence B. King, born Apr. 5, 1908, daughter of Solomon

and Alice Williams Peter, died Sept. 20. Preceding her in death was her husband, Arnold King. Florence was a resident at Messiah Village since 1992, and a member of the Free Grace congregation, Pa. The memorial service was held at the Messiah Village chapel with Rev. C. Ronald Burgard officiating. Interment was in Wiconisco Cemetery.

**Kipe:** Verna Belle Kipe, born Apr. 16, 1925, daughter of Roy A. and Lavina E. Stewart Lohman, died Oct. 11. Two sisters, Sylvia Short and Sarah Lobas, and a brother, George A. Lohman, preceded her in death. Surviving are her husband, Rev. Amos Kipe; a sister, Kathleen Helfrick; and nieces and nephews. Verna and George were married in 1945. She had been a clerk at Tele-dyne Landis Machine Co. from 1951-1989. She attended the Berean Sunday school class of the Fairview Ave. church, Waynesboro, Pa. The funeral service was held at the church with Rev. John D. Fickett and Rev. Maurice A. Bender officiating. Interment was in Green Hill Cemetery.

**Mell:** Sherwood N. Mell, born Oct. 25, 1916, chosen son of Stewart and Cora Myers Neff, died Sept. 21. Surviving are his wife, Kathryn R. (Brehm); two daughters, Pamela K. Lehman and Karen J. Williams; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; a brother, Kenneth Neff; and two sisters, Estella Stahler and Violet Lenger. Sherwood had been a resident of Messiah Village since 1984. He was retired from the automotive industry and attended the Mechanicsburg church, Pa. The memorial service was held at the Messiah Village Chapel with Rev. J. Robert Lehman officiating. Inter-

ment was in Grantham Memorial Park.

**Oberholtzer:** Clair M. Oberholtzer, born May 31, 1932, son of Harry B. and Martha Sangrey Oberholtzer, died Sept. 29. Surviving are his wife, June F. (Myers); a daughter, Vicky L.; three brothers, Jay R., Harry B., and Charles E.; and four sisters, Verna R. Merrich, Rhoda A. Burkholder, Jean L. Ginder, and Mary Anne Gochbauer. Clair had retired as a welder at New Holland Machine Co. in 1991. He was a life member of the Southern Manheim Township Fire Co., where he served as trustee, assistant chief, and sergeant in the fire police. He was a member of the Mountville Church of the Brethren where the funeral service was held with Rev. James Ernst, Rev. Omar B. Stahl, and Chaplain Ivan B. Brian officiating. Interment was in Mountville Brethren Cemetery.

**Sider:** George A. Sider, born

Mar. 22, 1913, son of Darius and Anna Doner Sider, died Aug. 22. Preceding him in death was his wife, Mable (Jones). Surviving are his wife, Milly (Brillinger); a daughter, Leila Saunders; two sons, Ralph and Eric; seven grandchildren; five great-granddaughters; and two sisters, Ruth Main and Marion Sider. George was a farmer and freelance salesman. He was a deacon at the Wainfleet, Port Colborne, and Ridgemount, Ont., churches for a total of 37 years. He served on various MCC and general church boards, was instrumental in pioneering Sunday schools and Bible schools in local churches, and was a teacher and superintendent. He was a member of the Heise Hill congregation, Ont. The funeral was held at the Wainfleet church with Rev. Mike Anderson, Rev. Isaac Flagg, and Bishop R. Dale Shaw officiating. Interment was in Maple Lawn Cemetery.

## Brethren in Christ 1998 VISION CALENDAR Photography Contest

*Denominational Vision: 250 Growing, Discipling,  
and Sending Congregations by A.D. 2000*

**First Prize: \$50 and cover location**

**Second Prize: \$25**

**Third Prizes (11 photos): \$10**

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### *Mennonite Your Way Directory 8*

#### **Deadline Extended**

The deadline for submitting host registrations for inclusion in the new edition of *Mennonite Your Way Directory 8* has been extended to **Wednesday, Jan. 8**. More than 1,200 names have already been received, and additional members are welcome.

Contact *Mennonite Your Way*, Box 1525, Salunga, PA 17538. Phone (717) 653-9288.



# Reflections on a reunion

One of the major events in 1996 for nearly 600 people was the reunion with former fellow students of the Beulah/Upland College and Academy. Phyllis Hershey Carlson and E. Morris Sider began initial thinking about the reunion in 1991. Later a local steering committee (Dorothy English Guengerich, Ardys Asper Lundeen, Ferne Wenger Nebeker), together with several subcommittees, assumed responsibility for planning and carrying out the event. (For some of the activities, see the August issue of the *Evangelical Visitor*.)

The reunion, held in late June immediately prior to General Conference, was a joyous event, even a heart-warming spiritual experience. Perhaps the best way to describe it is through the words of those who were there.

## Dorothy Guengerich

Undertaking such a reunion seemed somewhat like that of the founding fathers of Beulah College, described by Morris Sider in his history of Upland College as having "a certain naivete concerning the implications of such an undertaking" (p. 32). We had no "home" to come back to (in time that home was provided in Pacific Christian Center on the college site). We had no finances to rely on. Could we find people to do what needed to be done? Who would come? The ages of most of the younger people involved would be near sixty and range up to 100! The local Upland newspaper described the effort as "trying to raise a defunct ghost."

But the same spirit of cooperation and determination that Morris Sider says guided the founding fathers (p. 32) helped to make the reunion a success. Some attendants travelled long distances—from



Left: Royce Saltzman leading the mass choir of college and academy graduates.

Below: The former Conqueror's Quartet (left to right): Doyle Book, Donald Rohrer, Henry Landis, Morris Sider (substituting for Howard Heise, deceased).

five foreign countries and twenty-five states, including Hawaii. More than 125 people gave of their time and energy to prepare for the reunion. At least 90 gave monetary contributions or gifts in kind and services.

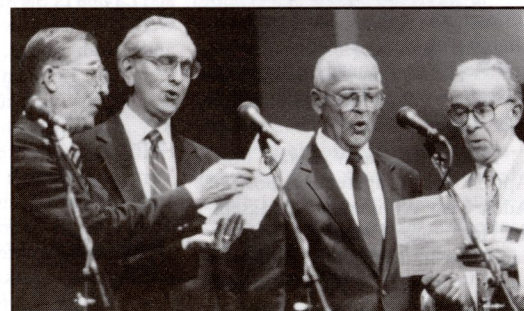
The reunion exceeded our fondest dreams. We sensed that the reunion was God-ordained. Our spirits gave praise and thanks to God from whom every good and perfect gift comes. He even gave us perfect weather by wiping away the smog and allowing us to enjoy the spectacular mountain scenery that we all associate with the college and the academy.

## David Carlson

The highlight of the experience for me was the banquet. There we met with numerous friends, some of whom we had not seen for forty years.

Most emotionally touching was the opening staff and faculty breakfast. The sheer joy of answering Bill Boyer's question as to how the college had contributed to our lives was thrilling. I should also include the great evening of singing under the direction of Royce Saltzman.

The joy of those two days was in affirming the Upland experience of being an academy and college instructor, and working with the choicest of colleagues who were dedicated and committed to



Christian service. It was a memorable, moving, and momentous reunion.

## John Z. Martin

One could not be a part of the Beulah-Upland College/Academy reunion without catching the feeling of excitement that permeated the entire campus. There was the joy of renewed friendships. There was, also, a sense of great satisfaction that the campus had been bought back, restored, and was again being used by the church. One sensed that everything had been very well-planned by many people who had worked together as a unit.

The Upland College motto, "A Vision for Service," became a personal motto which a great many of the Upland College alumni lived out in their lives. Upland College alumni have made a difference and are still doing so literally around the world. According to testimonies given at the reunion, the Upland College faculty and staff influenced lives more by what they were than by what they taught. Real friendships can survive long periods of separation; they are not diminished by time or distance.

Work done for the Lord never ceases to bear fruit, but multiplies and is enhanced by the passing of time. The results, as shown by this reunion, were worth all the efforts made by all those who taught, or had other responsibilities, at the Upland College and Academy.

## Marilyn (Byer) Smith

How can I adequately put into words my feelings about the Upland/Beulah College reunion? For me, it was an experience unlike any other. It spoke to deep,

### Several videotapes from the reunion are available, as follows:

- *A Vision for Service* (a pictorial history, with commentary, of the college and academy)—\$16
- Videotapes of the activities at the reunion (one each of the banquet, convocation chapel, and the music program)—\$10 each, or 3 for \$25
- A Pictorial Directory of all who attended the reunion—\$16
- Videotapes and Pictorial Directories may be obtained by making a check payable to Pacific Christian Center, 800 W. Arrow Highway, Upland, CA 91786.

A limited number of Morris Sider's 238-page book on the history of the college/academy, entitled *A Vision for Service* (hardback) is available for \$6 a copy (includes postage and tax). Make the check payable to Morris Sider and send it to the Archives, Messiah College, Grantham, PA 17027.



deep needs which, although I could verbalize in a limited way, were much deeper and more profound than I had realized.

This was more than a return of former students to their alma mater. It was more than an opportunity to remember and reminisce. It was a time to celebrate! After a thirty-year interval (or more), we came back both to the physical site and to this strategic point that had played such a large part in the formative years of our lives. Friends and classmates whom we hadn't seen in decades were once again assembled in one place at the same time. Faces had changed. Hair had become gray or white, or in some cases a youthful blond or brown (one would suspect with the assistance of hair coloring). The spirit, memories or shared experiences, feelings of love and appreciation for each other and of our times together, had only increased.

For me, growing up as I had in the Upland congregation, it was an opportunity to see members of families whom I had known since my earliest recollections. This reunion was a time of coming home, to this place where I had been nurtured physically, intellectually, and spiritually for so many years and at such a pivotal period in my life.

Sometimes I reflect upon and mourn the separations in my life, close friends who have moved away, or who have died and are no longer part of the daily fabric of my life. This reunion was a time, a very brief time, to repair and to knit together some of those separations. It was a time to hug, to laugh, to delight in each other, and to savor one another's presence.

Without question, a large part of this joy was because of our common bond through our faith in Jesus Christ. I had to wonder if this was a glimpse of what heaven will be like, a coming together after living in this fractured and disjointed world. A time of unbounded joy and delight. The pain and sorrow forgotten.

The love and appreciation remembered.

**Daniel Chamberlain** (in the convocation address)

The quality of a college is most often judged by its

alumni. It is through these individuals that the Upland heritage shines most brightly. Upland is God's college. It lives on in the countless classrooms where the idea and

ideals we learned here are promulgated. It lives on in multiplied homes where we strive to model our lives after those in this good and godly community [that was the college and academy]. It lives on in the minds of those who learned its lessons well and still strive to apply them to today's problems.

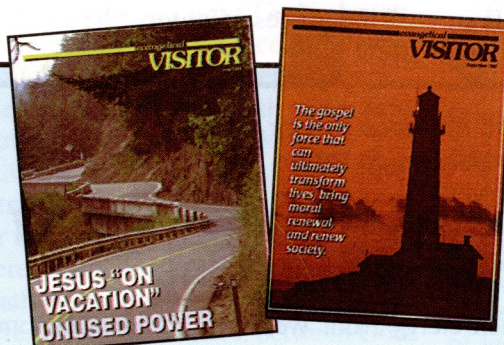
**Kay Boyer** (speaking in the convocation chapel as a representative of her late husband, Ernest Boyer)

Just because a flower fades does not mean its memory is less beautiful. I know that for certain. Just because Upland College merged with Messiah College does not mean that its meaning for us is diminished. The spirit of what Upland College so bravely strived to do and what it suc-



ceeded in doing, will continue to live on in all of us, as we acknowledge the gifts of those special years and as we continue to anticipate the gifts still in store.

Ernie once said, "The tragedy of life is not death; it is destined for all of us. The tragedy of life is to die with convictions undeclared and service unfulfilled." Upland College declared its convictions and in all of us its service continues to be fulfilled.



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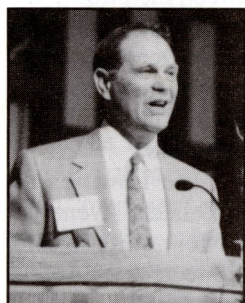
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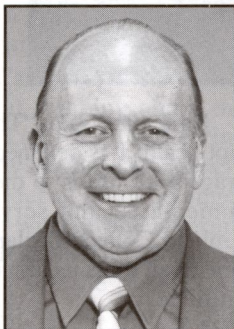




## Messiah Village appoints directors

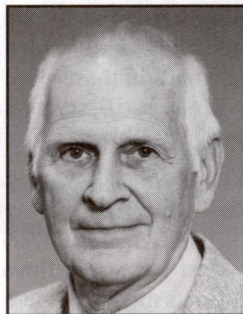
Emerson L. Leshar, Ph.D., President of Messiah Village, a continuing care retirement community, Mechanicsburg, Pa., recently named three new directors.

R. Donald Shafer was named Director of Public Relations. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller School of Theology. Pre-



viously, Dr. Shafer was General Secretary of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Marion J. Heisey was named Director of Pastoral Care. He holds a doctorate in psychology from Kent State. Previously, Dr. Heisey was Director of Brethren in Christ Navajo Mission in New Mexico and a professor at the University of New Mexico.



Donna Shank was named Director of the Access Center. She holds a

Masters Degree in Social Work from Marywood College. Previously, Mrs. Shank was a social worker for Older Adult Services at Philadelphia Hospital, Mt. Gretna, Pa.



## Ethiopian church leaders die in November plane crash

Two leaders of the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) in Ethiopia were killed November 23, 1996, in the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines jetliner which had been hijacked.

The two were Beyene Gutema, member of the MKC executive committee, and Zelalem Ayenew, an MKC pastor.

Gutema served on the Mennonite World Conference General Council. He was scheduled to lead Africa Day evening worship January 10, 1997, during Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered in Calcutta, India.

Both Gutema and Ayenew have wives and children. They were employed by World Vision in Ethiopia and were traveling to Kenya for work-related meetings.

The flight left Addis Ababa on November 23 with plans to stop in Nairobi, Kenya, enroute to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), in West Africa. Hijackers forced the pilot to fly south where the plane eventually crashed into the Indian Ocean, just off the shore of Comoro Islands, slightly southeast of Tanzania. The death toll was 123, with 52 survivors.

"We grieve with the families of Beyene Gutema and Zelalem Ayenew," said Larry Miller, Mennonite World Conference executive secretary. "At this time of deep loss and sorrow we pray that the 'father of compassion and the God of all comfort' console our sisters and brothers in Ethiopia, providing hope and strength."



### Wesleyan Holiness Clergy Women Internet discussion forum

## Wesleyan Holiness Clergy Women are On-Line

Women clergy from Wesleyan Holiness denominations and those interested in discussion of issues important to them are invited to join an on-going conversation on the Internet. Messiah College serves as host to a list-serve-style discussion called

WHWC. Messages, questions and answers, or simply information sharing is the purpose of this discussion group.

To subscribe, send a message via e-mail to [LISTSERV@mail.messiah.edu](mailto:LISTSERV@mail.messiah.edu) and in the body of the message, just put the single line request: subscribe WHWC Your First Name Your Last Name. To send a message to other subscribers, simply address your message to [WHWC@mail.messiah.edu](mailto:WHWC@mail.messiah.edu) and everyone on the list will immediately receive your message unless you ask it to be directed solely to one party. Questions on the listserv can be addressed to ReeAnn Hyde via email: [rhyde@fuller.edu](mailto:rhyde@fuller.edu) or by phone: (818) 577-7363.

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by  
Rick Mailloux

### Looking at "Mediator"

Since the Christmas season began, one word has fallen from our lips more than any other. I don't think it's "cantata" or "Christmas program" or "joy" or "carol" or "tree" or "decorations" or "food" or "Santa Claus" or even "Jesus." I think it's the word "gift." Gifts are so inseparably linked with Christmas that we can hardly think of one without the other. This time of year we have lists of gifts we hope to buy. My children have lists of gifts they hope to receive.

The way gifts are wrapped is intriguing to me. Some are wrapped so beautifully and delicately, you almost hate to disturb them. Others are homely but achieve the purpose covering the gift. At Bethlehem, God wrapped an "indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15) in "swaddling clothes" (Luke 2:7, KJV). God delivered to us One who is unique in eternity and time. The Scriptures assert, and we believe, that Jesus Christ is, at one and the same time perfectly God and perfectly human (see John 1:14-18; Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus Christ is the only one qualified to be the "...one mediator between God and man" (1 Timothy 2:5, NASB).

"Mediator" is one of the grand titles for Jesus in the New Testament and one full of meaning. The word translated "mediator" comes from the Greek word *mesites* which means "middle." Someone who stands between (in the middle of) two parties who are estranged and brings them together by settling their dispute is a *mesites*. This is Jesus. (See Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; and 12:24 where the word *mesites* is

used of Jesus. See also 1 Peter 3:18 for the idea.)

How the ancient Greeks used this word and its equivalent sheds light on the work of Christ on our behalf. If you or I lived in ancient Athens or Rome and had a dispute with someone, an arbiter—a *mesites*—would be appointed to settle the matter. Greek scholar William Barclay notes that "it was his [the arbiter's] duty, at all costs, to effect a settlement and a reconciliation between two parties who were at variance" (*New Testament Words*, p. 204). This is what Jesus did between us and God. The prophet Isaiah clearly states the problem: "...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God" (Isaiah 59:2, NASB). "At all costs" Jesus brought God and us together, reconciled us, through his death and resurrection. Paul wrote in Romans 5:8 "...while we were still sinners [and estranged toward God], Christ died for us." And he added in v. 10, "...we were reconciled [to God] through the death of his Son." Jesus wiped out the differences, the barriers, between God and us at Calvary. (See also 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.)

## At Bethlehem, God wrapped an "indescribable gift" in "swaddling clothes."

*Mesites* was also the term used for a person who would stand between a lender and a borrower. If, as a citizen of Athens in Jesus' day, you or I wished to borrow money from a bank, we would have to find someone who would be a *mesites*, a guarantor; that is, someone who was ready and willing to pay our debt in the event we could not. Like the debtor in the parable of Matthew 18:23-35 who was

unable to repay his debt to his king, so we have a debt to God we cannot pay (Rom. 3:23). Jesus is the *mesites* who makes good (pays off) our debt of sin to God (See Col. 2:14; Rom. 3:21-28). The assurance given to those who have faith in Jesus was captured in song by a nineteenth century hymn writer, S. J. Henderson. In his grand old hymn *Saved By the Blood*, Henderson writes, "Saved! Saved! (Glory, I'm Saved!) My sins [debts] are all pardoned, my guilt is all gone!... I'm saved by the blood of the Crucified One" (No. 432, *Hymns For Praise and Worship*).

When we say that Jesus is our mediator, we are saying several things:

1. Jesus is the great bridge, "The one who stands between God and man, not to separate them, but to bring them together" (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, p. 205).

2. Jesus is the great arbiter; breaking down the walls that divided God and us. The cross was the battering ram knocking down the barrier (sin) that separated us from God. The death of Jesus Christ was his supreme act of mediation. Everyone who trusts in Jesus has "peace with God" (Romans 5:1).

3. Jesus is the great mystery. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NASB). If a mediator is to be viable and effective, he or she must represent both parties fairly (see Galatians 3:20). Beyond our wildest dreams, the eternal Son of God took on flesh and blood and bone. Speaking of the Savior, songwriter Michael Card puts it this way in his song "To the Mystery": "And so to take our sin he [Jesus] was made like us, so we could be like him."

That is the mystery. Jesus is fully God and fully man—our Mediator. That is an "incredible gift." That's Christmas.

---

*Rick, Bonnie, Matthew, Phillip, and Kelsey will be celebrating Christmas at their home near Goshen, Indiana.*



# Discipleship for the 21st Century

## Look forward at Christmas

by Samuel Brubaker

Christmas carols have mostly been used to look back. Quite commonly, we sing the first stanza only. We do so in reverence and joy, in honor and thanks for God's gift of a Savior, and well we should. And we have committed to memory those first stanzas, so that we are likely to sing the carol without the book—and stop after singing one stanza.

Many of the carols have wonderful messages in addition to celebration of Christ's birth. They call us to right living; to deal generously with fellow humans as God has dealt with us; to spread the gospel Jesus brought. Some remind us of hope—that through Jesus' gospel, people can rise above the oft-repeated cycle of hate-fear-strife-hate; and that ultimately, all things will come under Jesus' lordship in a peaceful future.

The following carol is an example of one whose full message we often short-circuit. It is offered here in celebration of Jesus' birth, and for the encouragement of us all to keep focused on the great present and future Jesus made possible. The words were composed by Edmund H. Sears (1810-1876).

*It came upon the midnight clear, that  
glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to  
men, from heav'n's all gracious  
King."*

*The world in solemn stillness lay to  
hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they  
come with peaceful wings  
unfurled,  
and still their heav'nly music floats  
o'er all the weary world.  
Above its sad and lowly plains they  
bend on hov'ring wing.  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds the  
blessed angels sing.*

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
the world has suffered long;  
beneath the angels' song have rolled  
two thousand years of wrong;  
and man, at war with man, hears not  
the words of peace they bring.  
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,  
and hear the angels sing!*

*For lo! the days are hast'ning on by  
prophet-bards foretold,  
when with the evercircling years  
comes round the age of gold;  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the  
song which now the angels sing.*

Samuel Brubaker lives in Arcanum, Ohio.

## Onesimus...

continued from page 29

"Okay, Daddy."

I unplugged the lights, and we slipped out into the cool of the night. It was as if we had opened the back door of heaven and had stepped back into the natural world again. Across the parking lot some boys were bouncing a basketball on their way home from the playground.

It's all a mystery, I thought to myself, this life, this God, this Jesus. It's all a great big wonderful mystery—and I am so blessed to be a part of it.

We held hands on the way home, my daughter and I, listening to an Amy Grant tape, and both, in our own ways, pondering the mystery and the beauty of Christmas.

As always, I am your brother in Christ,  
O.

*This is the last column to be written by Onesimus XIV. In January, we'll reveal the identity of Onesimus XIV as well as hear from the Onesimus writer for 1997.*



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# Onesimus

Dear Paul,

Some images of the season embed themselves in one's memory like etching in glass. Each time you hold it up to light, it sparkles as if it were cut into your mind only yesterday.

It was the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent, our traditional day for the "hanging of the greens," the decorating of the church for the holidays. It's a tradition that hasn't really caught on in our young fellowship—and I had made the fatal mistake of not announcing it in worship the week before. I expected the worst, and resigned myself to decorating the church myself. As an afterthought, I decided to take my four-year-old daughter along for some of that daddy-daughter bonding that I hope will earn me a place in her heart even after she passes through adolescence.

We drove up towards the mountains to McClure's Christmas tree farm—a place that does its best to make you feel like you're out in the woods, even though you can see a tennis court in someone's back yard through the fence at the back of the lot. We picked the nicest eight-footer we could find, loaded it in the mini-van, and headed down to the church.

My mood was less than festive. I had a sermon to finish, and I was decorating the church with a four-year-old. Filled with holiday cheer I was not.

But there we were in an empty church. We set up the tree, and proceeded to drag the Christmas decorations out of a dark corner of the sanctuary. I strung the lights around the fragrant boughs while my daughter hung the ornaments on the lower branches—most, if not all of them, on the same branch.

I plugged the lights into the outlet. They jumped to life and lit up like stars against a night sky.

"Oh, Daddy!" she gasped. Her eyes were giant with wonder. "Let's turn off the lights and you tell me stories about when you were a boy."

I was taken aback. For one thing, I was too busy being grumpy to tell stories. And besides that, what stories did I have to tell?

But her eyes...her eyes were riveted on the tree, and they drew me in. I figured I should do my best to get

beyond my attitude and embrace this moment—and this little girl.

I hit the lights and sat down next to her in the front row of the empty sanctuary. She snuggled close to me, and rested her head in the crook of my arm. All of a sudden, it was a holy moment—a timeless encounter between father and daughter. I hadn't seen it coming, but she had seen it all along.

I settled in next to her, and began to tell her the simple memories of my childhood. I told her of going to Grandma and Grampa's house, of big meals and fires in the fireplace. I told her of the candlelight service on Christmas Eve at church, with the candles being lit, and everyone singing "Silent Night, Holy Night." I sang it to her quietly, and all the time her eyes were fixed on the lights on the tree.

Then I told her something I assumed she wouldn't understand. I assumed she wouldn't understand it because, in so many ways, I don't understand it either.

I said, "Honey, what God did for us in Jesus is a mystery. Do you know what a mystery is?"

"Uh-huh," she replied.

"It means God loved us so much to come to earth for us. We don't understand it all, but we know he loves us very much."

"Hmmm," she said, and snuggled closer to me, never taking her eyes off of the tree. She wasn't saying anything, but her face was aglow with a peace that was beyond words.

A mystery. What was I talking about? You know it so well, brother Paul. "...The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The mystery of a God who "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...being found in appearance as a man..." The mystery beyond comprehending—the mystery that is our eternal hope.

"It's late, honey. Let's clean up and go home," I suggested.

*continued on page 28*

*I hit the lights and sat down next to her in the front row of the empty sanctuary. She snuggled close to me, and rested her head in the crook of my arm. All of a sudden, it was a holy moment—a timeless encounter between father and daughter.*

Readers may correspond with Onesimus by writing to him c/o the **Evangelical Visitor**, P.O. Box 166, Nappanee, IN 46550. Letters to Onesimus may be published unless they are marked "Personal—Not for Publication."



# Focusing our Mission

## Rare and fragile

by Warren Hoffman

As a student at Messiah College, I took a course in genetics. I learned about Gregor Mendel, the Austrian monk who, in experiments with sweet peas, discovered the fundamental concepts of modern genetics.

Our college textbook did not inform us that Mendel had a younger brother, Johann, who also had a genius for botany. Only recently, in a book by Mike Mason, *The Furniture of Heaven and Other Parables for Pilgrims*, did I read about Johann Mendel.

The younger Mendel, also a monk, devoted his life to the patient crossbreeding of common plants.

One of his early attempts was a rose whose flower was transparent, almost colorless. The petals of this rose could hardly be seen. His colleagues laughed at a flower which, to them, seemed useless. But Johann had a special affection for this hybrid, which he named the *Rose of Poverty*.

Another of Johann's experiments produced a new strain which he called the *Mourning Violet*. The blossoms were a blaze of color, but the plant would only grow when watered with tears. Though other monks had little success cultivating this plant, the window box by Johann's room was always full of bright violet blooms.

Johann also developed a breed of lily-of-the-valley which flourished where other plants languished and wilted. This achievement passed unnoticed by the other monks. Perhaps because of this, Johann named this plant *Meekness*.

One experiment resulted in a new strain of wheat which Johann called the *Wheat of Righteousness*. Bread made from this wheat was exceptionally tasty. But whenever the bread was served, the monks complained, 'We're just as hungry after eating the bread as we were before!'

In his cultivation of carnations, Johann produced one with a blossom of singular beauty. But it only bloomed on the darkest, blackest nights. One of the few who ever saw this blossom, Johann named it *Mercy*.

After years of crossbreeding sweet peas, Johann developed a strain with a scent so subtle that it could barely be detected. Johann called this new variety *Purity*.

Another experiment, which his fellow monks dismissed as impractical, produced a tough, resilient kind of grape. The fibers of this vine could be braided into ropes of superior strength. But in its formative stages the young vines were unusually delicate, requiring hours of painstaking attention. Johann called this plant the *Peace Vine*.

In the evaluation of his fellow monks, only one of Johann's experiments had any value. It was a bush which grew as easily as a weed, spread rapidly, and provided abundant shade. To Johann's chagrin, this new bush, which had sharp thorns and scraggly blossoms, soon filled the monastery courtyard.

After a lifetime of labor, Johann died and was buried beneath a clump of these disappointing thorns. He left behind acres of new hybrids in a carefully tended garden, which he had named the *Garden of the Beatitudes*.

After he was gone, the garden was completely neglected. The majority of the monks could not appreciate plants with flowers and fruits which could only be seen, handled, or savored by a few odd eccentrics.

Yet, against all odds, the curious plants developed by this amateur botanist have endured through the years. Though rare, it is still possible for attentive observers to find tender shoots of these strange plants blossoming in the most unexpected places.

I must admit, now that I have learned about Johann Mendel's genetic experimentation, I cherish the hope that some amateur botanists among us will take up the work of cultivating these rare and fragile plants so that, once again, they may flourish in gardens like Johann's.

250 Growing, Discipling,  
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Warren Hoffman  
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Evangelical Visitor



# Editorial

## "And the Word became flesh and lived among us."

THESE WORDS recorded in the prologue of the Gospel of John are perhaps the greatest mystery ever known. The Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was one of the first to realize this great mystery, and he left his testimony in order that future generations could also experience the mystery of the incarnation. It might be helpful for us, when we consider the incarnation, to think about how and when John was able to recognize this greatest of all mysteries. Was it when Jesus turned the water into wine? Was it when Jesus fed the multitudes in the wilderness? When Jesus walked on the water? When Jesus was transfigured before John's eyes? When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? Probably none of these miraculous events (or even all of them combined) could account for John's perception of divine mystery.

The mystery that John perceived was not only that the Word *existed*, or even that the Word was able to *speak* and *act* within the confines of time and space. The mystery that John perceived was that the Word had *become flesh*, that is, that God had become boldly and intimately united with his human creations. John witnessed Jesus in Samaria when he was "tired from the journey," at noon, no less. John saw Jesus weep when he came to the tomb of Lazarus. John felt the touch of Jesus' hands washing his feet, and he heard Jesus' heart beating as he leaned against him at the table. John saw and heard Jesus on the cross when he was thirsty, and he saw the blood and water flow from Jesus' pierced side. The mystery was not merely an encounter with the Word, but an encounter with the Word in the flesh of humanity.

Not long after John's testimony had been recorded and distributed, a great controversy arose concerning how to rightly explain the mystery of the Word become flesh. This controversy became so great that it required the intervention of the emperor of the Roman Empire to settle the issue once and for all...but not really, as today this controversy remains alive and well. We could do well to learn from the beloved disciple himself how to better understand and communicate the mystery of the incarnation.

First, we can only perceive this mystery by experiencing it for ourselves, not simply by comprehending it intellectually. Although we don't have the opportunity to experience the incarnation in the same way John did, we all have the opportunity to experience the same mystery. Today we have the Scriptures and the Church, which both embody the same mystery as Christ. The Scriptures and the Body of Christ are the Divine become human, the eternal breaking into time, the transcendent appearing in space. We can read the very words of God, yet it is never

without the aid of the critical textual apparatus, and usually not without a committee of translators, and commentary (of one type or another). We can encounter God in the celebration of worship, as well as in the church classroom and the committee meeting. And we experience the incarnation in a special way when we participate in the sacraments of foot washing, baptism, and the Lord's supper, which are very much both divine and human.

Second, we would do well to follow the example of John and *proclaim* rather than *explain* the mystery of the incarnation. Most of us have grown up reading the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, and watching "Murder She Wrote." These "mysteries" are such for only a brief moment, then everything is explained and the mystery ceases to exist. The mystery of the Word become flesh is a true mystery, refusing explanation. Certainly John realized the inexplicability of the incarnation, but that did not stop him from continuing to experience and proclaim it all the way to Patmos and beyond.

As we celebrate the incarnation, may we each experience this mystery anew in our encounters with the Scriptures, as we spend time with our families, and as we meet together as sisters and brothers in Christ. And, as a result of our experience of it, may we be enabled to proclaim to all humanity the true mystery of the Word become flesh.

Gary Freymiller

FROM THE *Evangelical Visitor*, the staff of Evangel Press and the Christian Light Bookstores, and the members of the Board for Media Ministries—our fervent hope is that you will experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in a fresh way this Christmas. G



### Pontius' Puddle

Bulletins and newsletters reprinting "Pontius Puddle" must pay \$10 for each use to Joel Kauffman, 111 Carter Road, Goshen, IN 46526.







**But now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

*Ephesians 2:14, 17*

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